









# THE FIELD OF GLORY.

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL.

BY

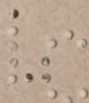
HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ.

*Translated from the Polish by Henry Britoff.*

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# THE FIELD OF GLORY

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## CHAPTER I.

THE winter of 1682 was so severe that even the oldest people could not remember another winter like it. Heavy rains had fallen in the autumn, and the first frost broke out in the middle of November, locking up the rivers and covering the trees with glass-like shells. Icicles settled down on the pines in the forests and began to break the branches. In the first days of December birds began to flock into the villages and the cities, and even wild beasts came out from the forests and ran toward human habitations.

On the 11th of December the sky became overcast with clouds and snow fell for ten days in succession. It covered the earth as with a shroud, two feet thick; it covered the paths of the forests and the fences; it covered the windows of the huts. People had to work their way through the snowbanks with shovels in order to reach their stables and barns; and when, at last, the snow stopped falling, a severe frost came, so that the trees in the forest cracked with thunder which sounded like the roaring of cannon.

When the peasants had to go to the forest for wood they went in crowds for safety's sake, and even then they feared lest night should overtake them far away from the village.

After sunset no one dared to come out even into his own yard without pitchforks or axes, and the dogs whined in short, abrupt, frightened barks, as they usually do at the approach of wolves.

And yet on such a night as this a large coach on slides, drawn by four horses, and surrounded by people, was making its way through the forest. In front rode a servant on a strong mare, holding a long pole on which was fastened an iron scoop with a dry, pitchy chip of wood burning in it—not to illumine the road, for everything was illuminated by the moonlight, but in order to frighten away the wolves. On the coach-box sat the coachman, on the shaft-horse a postilion, and on the sides of the coach, on off-horses, rode two fellows armed with sling-shots.

All this procession moved very slowly because of the high snowbanks, especially at the turns of the road.

This slowness taxed the patience and at the same time caused uneasiness to Pan Gedeon Pongowski, who, counting upon the number of his armed servants, had resolved to start on the journey, although in Radom he had been warned of the danger, especially because he had to go through the dense forest of Kozeniz in order to reach Belchotchki.

It had seemed to Pan Gedeon that if he left Radom before noon he would reach home before sunset. But it was necessary to clear the road, which took a few hours, so that evening was already closing in when they reached Yedlina. There they were again warned, and were advised to stay there over-night; but, as they found a wood-chip at the blacksmith's with which to light the road, Pan Pongowski commanded to go on.

And thus night came upon them while they were on the road.

It was difficult to go fast. Pan Gedeon felt a greater

and greater alarm, and finally he began to swear; but he did it in Latin, so as not to offend his relative, Pani Vinicka, and his adopted daughter, Panna Seninska, who were riding with him.

Panna Seninska was not experiencing any especial fear. On the contrary, she pushed aside the leather curtain of the coach window and, ordering the servant riding alongside to move ahead so as not to obstruct the view from her, looked out cheerfully upon the snowbanks and the trunks of the pines covered with long strips of snow, over which crept red reflections from the burning wood-chip, and which blended wonderfully with the green glitter of the moon. Then, folding her lips like a bird's bill, she began to blow, and she was amused because she could see her breath, which assumed a pink hue.

But the timid and aged Pani Vinicka began to grumble.

"Why was it necessary to leave Radom, or, at least, why didn't we stay over-night in Yedlina, where we were warned of danger? And all this merely out of obstinacy. It is quite a distance yet to Belchonchki, and all through the dense forest, where the wolves will surely bar the way, if the archangel Raphael, the protector of travelers, will not have mercy with those that have lost their way. They hardly deserve divine protection."

When Pan Pongowski heard this he flew into a passion. What else? To say that they had lost their way!

The road was like an arrow, and as for the wolves—no one could tell whether they would bar the way or not. He had a sufficient number of servants with him, and, then, a wolf does not come out willingly to meet a soldier, not only because he fears him more than an ordinary person, but out of respect and because a wolf is a cunning beast.

A wolf understands very well that neither a peasant nor a townsman will give him something for nothing, and only

the warrior will sometimes give him a good treat; it is not in vain that people call war the wolf's harvest.

Although Pan Pongowski spoke thus, and at the same time flattered somewhat the wolf's brood, he was not particularly sure of the wolfish disposition. And he began to think whether he should not order one of the servants to dismount and sit down beside the young lady. In that event he himself would protect one door of the coach, the servant the other; and, besides, the horse, left alone, would surely dart off backward or forward, and would thus lure away the wolves after him.

But it seemed to Pan Gedeon that it was too early to take these precautions.

In the meantime he put down on the front seat, near Panna Seninska, a pair of pistols and a knife, to have them in readiness. He had lost his right hand, so that he could manage things only with his left.

They rode several hundred yards undisturbed.

The road was becoming wider.

Pongowski, who knew the road well, heaved a sigh of relief and said:

"The Malikowa field is not far off."

He reasoned that, whatever might happen, the open field was better than the forest.

But just at this moment the servant who was riding in front with the torch suddenly turned his horse, rushed over to the coach and began to say something to the coachman and to the other servants quickly, and they answered abruptly, as people usually speak when there is no time to waste.

"What's the matter there?" asked Pan Pongowski.

"We hear something from the side of the meadow."

"Wolves?"

"Some voices, God knows what it is,"

Pan Pongowski was about to give an order to the man with the torch to gallop ahead and see what was going there; but he reconsidered and decided that it was better not to remain without light in such a case, and that it was best to keep together in a crowd. Then he thought that it was easier to defend themselves in the open meadow than in the dense forest, and he commanded them to go ahead.

But a minute later the servant again appeared at the window of the coach.

"Wild boars, Pan," he said.

"Wild boars?"

"A terrible grunting is heard on the right."

"Thank God!"

"Perhaps wolves are after them."

"That's why I said 'Thank God!' Let's pass by without delay. March!"

Indeed, the supposition of the servant proved to be correct.

Coming out on the meadow, the travelers noticed, at a distance of two or three flights of an arrow, on the right of the road, a crowd of wild boars huddled together, surrounded by a moving circle of wolves. The terrible grunting, in which ferocity sounded rather than alarm, became clearer and clearer. When the coach came out in the middle of the meadow the servants, watching from their saddles, noticed that the wolves did not dare attack the boars yet, but were only pressing closer and closer around them.

The boars drew up in a circle, the young ones in the center, the older ones on the outside, thus forming a movable stronghold, terrible, invincible, fearless, their white tusks flashing.

And between the circle of the wolves and the black mass of boars was a white circle of snow, bathed, like the whole meadow, in brilliant moonlight.

Several of the wolves leaped toward the boars, but immediately retreated as though frightened by the fierce bursts of grunting.

If the wolves had already attacked the boars the struggle would have kept them busy there, and the coach would have gone by undisturbed; but since this had not yet happened, there was the danger that the wolves might drop the perilous attack in order to undertake another one.

And, indeed, a minute later a few wolves drew away from the rest and turned toward the coach. Soon others followed, but the sight of armed people stupefied them.

Some began to pile up behind the coach; others ran in front of it or whirled about the coach wildly, as though they wished to excite themselves.

The servants wanted to fire, but Pan Pongowski forbade it, for fear lest the shots should attract the rest of the wolves.

In the meantime the horses, even though accustomed to wolves, began to press against one another and to turn their heads on the side with loud snorting, and a minute later happened something which increased the danger a hundredfold.

The young off-horse, on which rode the servant with the torch, began to prance, and then dashed aside.

The servant, realizing that he would be devoured by the wolves if he fell off the horse, grasped the bow; but doing this, he let the scoop containing the torch fall, and it sank into the snow.

The wood-chip blazed up, then died out, and now only the moonlight illumined the meadow.

The coachman began to pray, while the servants began to swear.

Encouraged by the darkness, the wolves closed in more persistently, and other wolves were coming from the side

where the boars were. Some of them came very close, the bristles standing up on their backs, their teeth gnashing. The red and green lights flashed in their eyes.

A desperate moment ensued.

"Shall we fire, sir?" asked one of the servants.

"Frighten them away by shouting," answered Pan Pongowski.

Immediately a shrill "A-goo! a-goo!" smote the air. The horses regained courage, and the wolves, on whom human voices produce a strong impression, retreated a few steps.

But something stranger still happened.

The forest echo repeated the shouts with greater power, and suddenly peals of mad laughter resounded, and a minute later a crowd of men on horseback appeared on both sides of the coach and darted off at full speed toward the wild boars and the wolves around them.

In an instant the boars and the wolves, unable to endure the attack, scattered over the meadow as if a whirlwind had dispersed them. Shots resounded and shouts, and again the same peals of some queer laughter.

The servants of Pan Pongowski also rushed after the horsemen, so that only the coachman and one servant riding a side-horse remained near the coach.

"Has help come from heaven?" exclaimed, at last, Pani Vinicka.

"We must be thankful, wherever it came from," replied Pan Pongowski. "We were in a bad fix."

And Panna Seninska, desiring to say something, added:

"God has sent these young knights!"

How Panna Seninska could conclude that they were knights, and young ones at that, it was difficult to tell, for they rushed past the coach like a whirlwind; but no one asked any questions about that, because they were too much agitated with what had happened.

For several minutes the echoes of pursuit were still ringing in the air, and not far from the coach one wolf (his back was evidently broken by a sling-shot) sat on his hind paws and howled for pain so terribly that chills shot through every one's frame.

The postilion jumped from his horse and went over to kill him, for the horses began to jump about so that they had partly broken the shaft.

After a little while the horse-division again appeared on the snow-covered plain.

It now moved in a crowd, wrapped in mist; notwithstanding that the night was clear and transparent, the tired horses smoked in the cold like stove-chimneys.

The riders were approaching with laughter and songs, and when they came near one of them advanced to the coach and asked, in a cheerful, ringing voice:

"Who is going there?"

"Pongowski from Belchonchki. To whom am I indebted for saving us?"

"Ciprianowicz from Edlinka!"

"And the Bukoyemskis!"

"Thank you, gentlemen! God has sent you at the right moment. Thank you!"

"Thank you!" repeated a young feminine voice.

"Thank God that we came in time!" answered young Ciprianowicz, raising his fur cap.

"How did you know about us?"

"Nobody told us, but the wolves started out in a crowd, and we went out to save people, and since there is such a worthy personage among you our joy and pleasure before God is all the greater," answered Ciprianowicz, kindly.

And one of the Bukoyemskis added:

"Not counting the hides."

"Really, it is indeed a knightly affair," said Pan Gedeon,

"and a fine act, for which, with God's help, I shall return my thanks to you in the near future. Now, I think the wolves have lost their desire to have a taste of human flesh, and we will reach home safely."

"One cannot be sure about that. The wolves will doubtless come together again and once more bar your way."

"Then there is no way out of it. But we shall not surrender."

"There is a way, and that is, that we will escort you to your house. Perhaps we may save some other people on the way."

"I did not dare ask you to do that, but, since you are so kind, be it so, because the ladies with me will not be in such fear."

"I am not afraid as it is, but I am grateful to you with all my soul," declared Panna Seninska.

Pan Pongowski gave the order and all started off, but ere they had gone a few steps the shaft broke completely and the coach stopped, which caused a new delay.

True, there were ropes, and the servants immediately began to fasten together the broken parts of the shaft; but it was utterly improbable that the shaft would hold out with such hasty repairs.

Then young Ciprianowicz thought a while, lifted his cap again and said:

"It is nearer from here to Edlinka, through the forest, than to Belchonchki. Do us the honor and come to pass the night in our house. I do not know what will happen to us in the depth of the forest, and whether we will be able to cope with all the beasts which will surely come together on the road. We'll drag the coach away somehow or other, and the shorter the distance we have to drag it the better. To tell the truth, the honor you will thus bestow

upon us will exceed our desert; but, as it is almost *dura necessitas*, we will not become overproud."

Pan Pongowski did not reply at once, because he felt a reproach in these words.

He recalled that when the old man Ciprianowicz two years ago came to offer his compliments to him in Belchonchki Pan Gedeon received him kindly, but somewhat haughtily, and in his turn did not go to visit him, because he was "*homo novus*," from a family to which gentry was granted but in the last generation, an Armenian by birth, whose grandfather had dealt in silk goods in Kamentz.

The son of this dealer, Yakub, had served under the great Chudkiewicz in the artillery, and under Chutin rendered such important services that by the recommendation of Stanislavus Lubomirski he was made a noble and was given the royal estate Edlinka as a life estate. Then, during the life of his successor, Serafin, the life estate was mortgaged.

The young man who came with such kind aid was the son of Serafin.

And Pan Pongowski felt the reproach all the more because the words "we will not become overproud" were uttered by the young Ciprianowicz somewhat haughtily and with intentional emphasis.

But, properly speaking, it was just this knightly pride that appealed to the old nobleman; and, as it was hard for him to refuse his savior, and as the road to Belchonchki was really long and unsafe, he hesitated no longer, and said:

"Without your aid the wolves would perhaps have been fighting now over our bones. Allow me to repay you at least with the pleasure with which I accept your offer. Let us go!"

Ciprianowicz gave commands to get ready to start.

The shaft was broken as if some one had chopped it with

an ax. They tied one end of the rope to the sledge-slides, the other to the saddles, and courageously started off, while the riders shouted and the Bukoyemskis sang.

Edlinka was not far away. Presently a vast meadow opened before the travelers, rather a huge field surrounded by dense forests, and upon it were a few houses, the roofs of which, covered with snow, flashed and sparkled in the moonlight.

A little distance away from the peasants' huts were farm-houses situated in a ring about a yard, and in the distance was the master's house, quite ungainly looking, built by Ciprianowicz from a little house in which a forester had lived once upon a time, but which was still too large for such a little village.

From the windows of the house came a bright light, reddening the snow at the entrance hall, the bushes which were growing in front of the house and the well-cranes which protruded on the right side of the entrance.

Evidently old Ciprianowicz was expecting his son, and perhaps even guests from the road, because as soon as the coach reached the gate several servants with torches ran out on the entrance stairway, and after the servants came the master himself, in a marten fur coat and a fitchew cap, which he removed as soon as he sighted the coach.

"Who are the dear guests God has sent us into our thicket?" he asked, descending the stairway.

Young Ciprianowicz kissed his father's hand and informed him whom he brought with him; and Pan Pongowski, stepping out of the coach, said:

"I have long wished to do that which painful circumstances have now compelled me to do, and I thank all the more the opportunity which coincides also with my wish."

"People are subject to various adventures, but to me

your adventure is good fortune, wherefore I am glad to invite you to my house."

Saying this, Pan Serafin bowed again and extended his hand to Pani Vinicka, after whom all the others entered the house.

And immediately the guests were seized with a feeling of comfort, which is usually the case with travelers who come from darkness and cold into warm and well-lighted rooms. Indeed, there was a bright fire in the fireplaces, in the hall way, and in the other chambers, and, besides, the servants began to light candles everywhere.

Pan Pongowski looked around with a certain degree of surprise, because the average homes of the nobility were far from being luxurious, while luxuries were plainly in evidence in Ciprianowicz's house.

By the light of the flames in the fireplaces and of the candles in all the chambers he saw things such as were not to be found in every castle: Italian chests and chairs made of carved wood, here and there clocks and Venetian glass, candelabra of perfect copper, Oriental arms studded with turquoise and hung about on embroidered rugs. On the floors lay little, soft Crimean rugs.

"It's all left over from the times when they were merchants," thought Pan Pongowski, with a shade of anger; "and now they can turn up their noses before our nobility and pride themselves on their wealth, which was acquired not with weapons in their hands."

But the kindness and the sincere hospitality of the Ciprianowiczs disarmed the old nobleman, and when, a little later, he heard the rattle of dishes in the adjoining room he at once found himself altogether in a good-natured state of mind.

In order to warm up the guests who had come from the cold, hot wine, flavored with spices, was served. A con-

versation was started about the danger that had just been escaped. Pan Pongowski praised the young Ciprianowicz, who, instead of sitting in a warm room, was saving people on the roads, in spite of the fierce frosts, the fatigue and the danger.

"True," he said, "those glorious knights acted thus in days gone by who traveled about the world, guarding people from serpents, dragons and all sorts of evil things."

"If one of them ever succeeded in saving such a beautiful princess," replied the young Ciprianowicz, "then he was just as happy as we are at the present moment."

"True! Nobody has ever saved a more beautiful one! I swear by God, you have said the truth!" exclaimed the four brothers Bukoyemski enthusiastically.

Panna Seninska smiled gently, so that two little dimples appeared on her cheeks, and then she lowered her eyes.

To Pan Pongowski, however, this compliment seemed to be rather over-familiar, because Panna Seninska, though an orphan, and without any means, belonged to a family of magnates. He turned the conversation into another channel and asked:

"Is it long since you have started to go out on the roads?"

"Since the heavy snow fell, and we will continue until the frosts cease," replied young Stanislaw Ciprianowicz.

"Have you killed many wolves?"

"Enough for fur coats for all of us."

At this point the Bukoyemskis began to laugh, and when they became quiet the oldest, Yan, said:

"His Highness the King will be satisfied with his foresters."

"True," said Pan Pongowski. "Yes; I have heard that you are the foresters in this royal forest. But the Bukoyemskis are from Ukraine by birth, are they not?"

"We are of those Bukoyemskis."

"So, so! A fine family, Elo-Bukoyemski. You have there some kinship to the great families."

"And to St. Peter!" exclaimed Lukash Bukoyemski.

"Ah?" Pan Pongowski inquired over again.

And he began to look at the four brothers sternly and suspiciously, as though desiring to find out whether they allowed themselves to make sport of him. But the brothers' faces were clear, and they shook their heads with profound conviction, thus affirming what they said. At last Pan Pongowski asked, with extreme amazement:

"Relatives of St. Peter? *A quo modo?*"

"Through the Przhegonowskis."

"What have the Przhegonowskis to do with that?"

"Through the Uswiats."

"And the Uswiats again through somebody else," said the old noble, with a smile, "and so on up to the birth of the Lord Christ. So! It is good to have relatives in the earthly senate; how much more so in the heavenly! But how did you manage to come from the Ukraine to our Kozeniz forest, for I have heard that you have lived here several years already?"

"Three years. The rebellion has long ago leveled our Ukraine estates to the ground, and then the border has changed there. We did not want to serve in the division of the Tartars, the pagans, and we first served in our army, then we leased land, and then our relative, Pan Malchinski, has appointed us as foresters here."

"Yes," said old Ciprianowicz; "one thing seems strange to me: how we all came together here in this dense forest; for we all come from other places—the inconstancy of human fate has brought us together. Your estates"—he turned to Pan Pongowski—"as far as I know, are in Russia."

Pan Pongowski trembled at this as if some one had touched an unhealed wound of his.

"Yes, I had estates there," he said; "but those places became odious to me, because misfortunes struck me there like lightnings."

"It's God's will," replied Ciprianowicz.

"Of course, it is hard to struggle against it, but it was also hard to live there."

"As we know, you have served in the army for a long time."

"Until I lost my arm. I took vengeance both for my fatherland and for myself. And if the Lord Jesus will forgive me at least one sin for each heathen head, then I entertain the hope that I may never see hell."

"Of course, of course! Serving one's fatherland is a desert, and misfortune is a desert. It is best to avoid sad thoughts."

"I would be glad to run from them, but they don't want to run from me. But enough about this. When I became a cripple, and at the same time the guardian of this girl, I settled down in a quiet place in my declining days, where the Tartars never come, and I stay, as you see, in Belchonchki."

"You're right. I do the same," said old Ciprianowicz. "The young people, although it is peaceful now, seeking adventures, are yearning for the broad road; but, nevertheless, those lands where everybody is mourning for somebody are terrible and dismal."

Pan Pongowski lifted his hand to his forehead and held it there for a long time; and then he said, in a sad voice:

"It is true that in those lands either a peasant or a magnate can live—a peasant, because, should there be a heathen invasion, he would run to the woods and could live there like a wild beast for months; and the magnate, because he

has fortified castles and regiments of his own to protect him. And then everything happens! There were the Zhulkevskis that perished; there were the Danilovichs that perished. Of the Sobieskis, the brother of our happily reigning King Yan perished. And how many others! One of the Wisneweckis was dangling on the hook in Stambul; Korezki was beaten to death with iron rods; the Kalikowskis perished, and before that the Gerburts and Yazloweckis paid their tribute in blood. At different times some of the Seninskas, who had once upon a time had in their possession that entire land, fell. What a cemetery it is! If I were to enumerate them all it would take me until morning. And if I were to enumerate not the magnates alone, but also the noblemen, a month would hardly be sufficient."

"True, true! But it is amazing how the Lord has multiplied this Turkish and Tartar foulness; for so many of them were killed that when the peasant harrows in the spring he comes upon heathen skulls at every step. O Lord, my God! How many of them were killed, say, by our present King! There was enough blood there to fill a river, and they lie there and lie."

That was true.

The republic, torn asunder by the disorders and the insubordination of the nobility, could not support a strong army, which could have been able in one great war once for all to make an end to the Turkish-Tartar invasions.

All Europe could not produce such an army.

Therefore was this republic inhabited by boisterous people who had not the slightest desire to stretch out their necks under the knife of the Eastern plunderers. On the contrary, ever new streams of Polish settlers, attracted not so much by the fertile soil as by the thirst of constant warfare and adventures, rushed forth upon this terrible border

field which was covered with graves and soaked in blood—that is, Podolia, Ukraine and Central Russia.

“The Poles,” wrote an ancient historian—Kromer—“go to Russia to contend with the Tartars.”

Thus peasants came from Mazovia; military nobles, who were ashamed “to die a peaceful death on their beds,” came; at last mighty magnates developed in these lands, and, not confining themselves to keeping the defensive at home, often went far, far away, to Crimea, to Walkhia, to seek there for power, victories, death, eternal salvation and glory.

It was even said that the Poles did not want one great war, but that they wanted to take advantage of it all the time. And though this was not true, nevertheless the fiery tribe was pleased with constant disorders, and the Tartars sometimes paid in blood for their audacity.

Neither the lands of Dobruzhia, nor those of Akkerman, and still less the fruitless Crimean reeds, could support their savage inhabitants, and hunger drove them toward the fertile frontier, where a rich booty awaited them, and often, also, death.

The redness of the sky caused by the fires illumined there the battles which are not recorded in history. Separate regiments reduced to dust the Tartars, who outnumbered them ten to one. Only the amazing rapidity of their movements saved the plunderers, but in general every Tartar overtaken by the regular army of the republic was doomed to death, without the hope of ever saving himself.

There were expeditions—especially those made up of but few men—from which not one returned to Crimea. There was a time when the names of Pretwiz and Chmeletzki were terrible to the Tartars and the Turks. Of the secondary knights the following were written upon their memory in blood: Wolodiewski, Pelka and the elder Rushchiz, who

reposed in their graves for several years. But no one had shed as much blood of the followers of Islam as the present King, Yan III. Sobieski.

Near Podgaitzi, Kalush, Chutin and Lwowo lay to this day unburied heaps of heathen bones whitening the vast fields as with snow.

But at length terror seized all the hordes.

Then those at the frontier heaved a sigh of relief, and when the insatiable Turkish power began to seek easier conquests the entire exhausted republic heaved a sigh of relief, and only painful recollections remained.

Far from the present nook of the Ciprianowiczs, on a hillock, stood a tall cross with two spears. Twenty years ago Pan Pongowski erected it there in the place of a house which had been destroyed by fire, and whenever he thought of this cross and of all the dear beings he had lost on that place his old heart contracted with pain.

But he was stern with his own self as with others; he was ashamed of shedding tears before strangers; he could not bear cheap commiseration, and did not care to speak any more about his misfortunes. So he began to question his host as to how he was getting along in the forest.

The host replied:

"It is quiet here, quiet! When the pines make no noise and the wolves do not howl, then we can hear the snow falling. We have tranquillity; we have a fire in the fireplace and a jug of warm wine in the evening, and old age requires nothing more."

"True. But your son?"

"The young bird will sooner or later fly away from the nest. The old trees are murmuring something about a great war with the pagans."

"The old falcons will also fly out to this war. I, too, would have gone out with the rest if not for this."

. . . .

Pan Pongowski shook his empty sleeve, in which but a small piece of his arm remained.

Ciprianowicz poured out some wine.

"For the victory of Christian arms!"

"God grant it!"

In the meantime the young Ciprianowicz poured out wine from the steaming jug for Pani Vinicka, Panna Seninska and the four brothers Bukoyemski. The ladies scarcely touched the brims of the goblets with their lips, therefore the Bukoyemskis did not have to be entreated, wherefore the world grew to them ever more cheerful from minute to minute and Panna Seninska ever more beautiful.

At last the oldest, Yan, said:

"It is not surprising that the wolves wanted to devour you; although a wolf is a wild beast, still he knows a good thing."

The other Bukoyemskis, Matvey, Marek and Lukash, even struck themselves on the knees for joy.

"That's true!"

"You've hit the right point!"

"Of course!"

Hearing this, Panna Seninska folded her hands and, figning a frightened air, said to the young Ciprianowicz:

"Save me, for I see that your guests have saved me from the wolves so that they could devour me themselves!"

"Oh, no," answered Ciprianowicz, cheerfully. "Pan Yan Bukoyemski said that the wolves were not to be wondered at, and I say that the Bukoyemskis are not to be wondered at for desiring to devour you."

"Then I shall begin to pray: 'Under Thy protection——' "

"Only don't be scoffing at sacred things!" exclaimed Pani Vinicka.

"These knights are ready to devour auntie together with me. Isn't it so?"

But this question remained unanswered for a minute. It was evident by the faces of the Bukoyemskis that they felt a smaller desire for that. But Lukash, who was more quick-witted than his brothers, said:

"Let Yan answer—he is the oldest brother."

Yan became somewhat confused, but said, nevertheless: "Who knows what will happen to-morrow?"

"A true remark," said Ciprianowicz; "but what bearing has it to this question?"

"What?"

"Nothing. I merely asked you why you mentioned to-morrow."

"Don't you know that feelings are worse than wolves, for you can kill a wolf, while you cannot kill the feeling."

"I know it, but this is a different story."

Panna Seninska began to giggle in her hand, then Ciprianowicz followed, and finally the Bukoyemskis began to giggle. But the servant calling to supper interrupted the conversation.

The old Ciprianowicz offered his arm to Pani Vinicka and the young man led away Panna Seninska.

"It is hard to argue with Pan Bukoyemski," remarked the girl, merrily.

"Because his opinions are like unruly horses, each of which pulls in a different direction. Nevertheless, he uttered two truths, with which it is impossible to disagree."

"What is the first truth?"

"That no one knows what to-morrow is to bring him, as, for instance, I did not know that my eyes would meet you to-day."

"And the other?"

"That it is easier to kill a wolf than a feeling. This is a great truth!"

Having said this, young Ciprianowicz heaved a sigh, and she lowered her heavy eyelashes and maintained silence.

And only when they seated themselves by the table she said:

"How soon do you expect to come to Belchonchki, that my guardian may return thanks to you for saving and entertaining us?"

The morose frame of mind of Pan Pongowski disappeared to a great extent during supper, and when the host pronounced in chosen expressions a toast for the health of the ladies, and then for that of his honorable guest, the old nobleman responded very kindly, thanking him for having been saved from danger and assuring him of his eternal gratitude.

Then the conversation turned *de publicis*; they spoke of the King, of his triumphs, of the meeting that was to be held in April, and of the war which threatened the German Empire from the side of the Turkish Sultan, and for which the Maltese cavalier, Gieronim Lubomirski, was already gathering volunteers in Poland.

The Bukoyemskis listened with great interest to how every Pole was received in Germany with open arms, because the Turks regarded the German cavalry with contempt, while the Polish cavalry called forth in them due fear.

Pan Pongowski censured somewhat the pride of Cavalier Lubomirski, who said of the German counts, "A dozen of them can creep into one of my gloves"; but he praised his knightly qualities and his great experience in the arts of warfare.

Lukash Bukoyemski, on hearing this, announced in his own name and in the name of his brothers that at the ad-

vent of spring they will start off to the cavalier, but while the frosts last they will continue to kill wolves in order to avenge Panna Seninska. And though Yan had said that he did not wonder at the wolves, he (Lukash), whenever he thought that such an innocent little dove could become their victim, then his heart contracted with rage, and at the same time it was hard for him to restrain his tears.

It was a pity, he said, that wolves' hides were so cheap, and that the Jews hardly gave a dollar for three of them; but it was hard to restrain the tears, and it was even better to give vent to them, because if some one would not feel sorry for oppressed innocence and virtue, he would prove to be a barbarian, unworthy of the title of knight and noble.

Saying this, he indeed gave vent to his tears, and the other brothers followed his example. Although the wolves in the worst case could threaten the life and by no means the innocence of Panna Seninska, still, the eloquence of Lukash moved his brothers so much that their hearts softened like molten wax.

They even wanted to fire shots from their pistols in honor of Panna Seninska, but the master of the house objected to this on the ground that there was a sick forester in the house, a worthy man, and one requiring quiet.

Pan Pongowski thought that it must be some poor relative, a noble, and, out of politeness, began to question him about the man; but when he learned that the man in question was a plain peasant, who had been in the employ of Ciprianowicz, he shrugged his shoulders, looked at the host with surprise, and said:

"Oh, yes! I have almost forgotten what they say about your too kind heart."

"I hope to God that nothing bad has been said about me!" answered Pan Serafin. "I am very much indebted to this man, and, besides, he may be of use to anybody, for

he is familiar with all varieties of herbs and is of great help in every disease."

"But one thing surprises me—why can't he cure himself if he can cure others? Send him over some time to my relative, Pani Vinicka, who makes all sorts of extracts from herbs and tortures people with them. But it is time to think about resting, because the journey has fatigued me terribly, and the wine has made me somewhat tipsy, just as it has made the Bukoyemskis."

And, indeed, the Bukoyemskis' heads were reeling, and their eyes were dim and excited, and when the young Ciprianowicz accompanied them to the wing of the house where he was to pass the night with them they walked unsteadily over the creaking snow, surprised why the moon was laughing at them from the roof of the barn, instead of shining in the sky.

But Panna Seninska was so deeply rooted in their hearts that they wanted to talk more of her.

At last the oldest brother, Yan, heaved a deep sigh; then he blew at the fireside with such force that the fire trembled, and he said:

"O Jesus! My dear brethren! Weep for me, because a terrible moment has begun for me!"

"What moment? Speak; conceal not!"

"I love so that my knees are bending."

"And I, do you think I do not love?" exclaimed Lukash.

"And I?" shouted Matvey.

"And I?" concluded Marek.

Yan was about to say something in reply, but could not do it at once, because he began to feel bad. He merely opened his eyes wide with great amazement and began to examine them as though he now saw them for the first time.

Finally anger was mirrored in his face.

"What, you scoundrels! he shouted; "you want to stand in the way of your oldest brother and deprive him of his happiness?"

"How important!" answered Lukash. "What of it? Is Panna Seninska a majorat that she should belong to the oldest brother only? We were born of one father and one mother, consequently if you insult us you are disturbing our parents' bones in their graves. Everybody is allowed to love."

"True; but beware, because you are obliged to me *obedientiam*."

"To bow to a donkey's head all life long? Is that it?"

"You are a heathen. You are scoffing at sacred things, like a dog."

"You are scoffing at sacred things yourself. Jacob was younger than Esau, and Joseph was the youngest of the brethren; consequently you slander the Holy Scriptures and you bark at religion."

Yan, forced to the wall by these arguments, was not ready to make reply at once, and when Matvey added something about Cain he lost his head completely.

His anger was growing more and more intense, and finally he began to feel for his sword, which was fastened to his side.

It is hard to tell how this affair would have ended, if it had not been for Marek, who seemed to have been wrestling with a certain thought all the while, and who finally exclaimed, in a thundering voice:

"I am the youngest of you; I am Joseph, consequently Panna Seninska is mine!"

The others turned to him with indignation and with wildly flashing eyes:

"What? Yours? Yours, you goose-egg, you straw-doll, you horse-glanders, you drunkard! Yours?"

"Shut your mouth; so say the Scriptures."

"Which Scriptures, you fool?"

"It makes no difference which Scriptures, but that's what they say. You are drunkards yourselves, not I."

But at this point Stanislaw Ciprianowicz interfered.

"Aren't you ashamed?" he said. "You are brothers, nobles, and yet you start a fight. Is this the way you look upon brotherly love? And what's the quarrel about? What is Panna Seninska? Is she a mushroom which falls into the bag of him who finds it first in the forest? Remember the custom which exists among the pelicans. Not only are they not nobles, they are not even human beings; but on account of the feeling of kinship they yield to one another in everything, and when they catch no fishes they feed each other on their own flesh. You speak of your parents, but they are now shedding tears, seeing the quarrel of their sons, of whom they must have asked something else in their blessing before they died. The very joys of paradise are not sweet to them now, and they cannot lift their eyes to those four evangelists whose names were given to you at the holy baptism."

Thus spoke Stashko Ciprianowicz, and though at first he felt like laughing, he was carried away by his own eloquence as he spoke, notwithstanding that he was somewhat tipsy himself. But the Bukoyemskis were in the end so touched by his speech that all four burst into tears, and the oldest, Yan, exclaimed:

"Oh, for God's sake, kill me, but don't call me Cain!"

At this Matvey, who had mentioned Cain, rushed into his embrace.

"Brother, I deserve to be turned over to the hangman!"

"Forgive me, or I will burst with grief!" implored Lukash.

And Marek kept repeating:

"I have slandered the commandments like a dog!

And they began to embrace one another. But Yan, freeing himself at last from his brothers' embraces, suddenly seated himself on a bench, unbuttoned his coat, tore his shirt, and, uncovering his chest, said, in a broken voice:

"Here it is for you! Like a pelican! Take!"

The other brothers began to sob still louder.

"A pelican! A real pelican! By God, a pelican!"

"Take Panna Seninska!"

"She is yours! You take her!"

"Let the younger ones take her!"

"Never! It can't be!"

"Let her go! We don't want her at all!"

Suddenly Lukash struck himself on the hips so that the echo resounded in the room.

"I know!" he cried.

"What do you know? Speak—conceal not!"

"Let Ciprianowicz take her!"

The other Bukoyemskis jumped up from their benches for joy, so much did the words of Lukash appeal to their hearts, and they surrounded Ciprianowicz.

"Take her, Stashko! You will thus reconcile us the better! Do it for our sake!"

"May God bless you!" exclaimed Yan, lifting his eyes heavenward and outstretching his hands over Ciprianowicz.

And Ciprianowicz reddened, overwhelmed by astonishment, and only kept repeating:

"Fear the Lord!"

But his heart trembled in his breast at the mere thought of it, for, staying with his father in this forsaken, dense forest, and mingling little with the outside world in general, it was a long time since he had seen such a charming girl.

He had seen such girls in Bzhezhani, whither his father

had sent him to be polished and to gain a familiarity with public affairs; but at that time he was a mere boy, and time had long since effaced these impressions.

He became terribly confused, and repeated once more:

“Fear the Lord! How do you or I come up to her?”

But the Bukoyemskis, as is usually the case with intoxicated people, would not notice any obstacles, and began to argue.

“None of us will be jealous, and you had better take her,” insisted Lukash. “We intended to go to war, anyway; we have been watching the forest long enough. Thirty dollars for a whole God’s year! It isn’t enough for drink, to say nothing of other things. We sold our horses, we sold everything else. We use your horses when we go after wolves——”

“Everybody knows that orphans must suffer. It is better to die in the war! And you had better take her, if you love us.”

“Take her,” exclaimed Yan, “and we will at once start off to Cavalier Lubomirski, to kill the pagans.”

But Ciprianowicz already came to himself and sobered up as though he had not touched a drop of wine since morning.

“Consider what you are saying. Is my desire or yours sufficient for this? And she herself, and Pan Pongowski, who is a proud and intractable man? Even if the Panna would in time become my friend, he would, perhaps, prefer to have her work in the field rather than to see her married to such a poor fellow like me or one of you.”

“Is that so?” exclaimed Yan. “And Pan Pongowski himself—what is he, a great hetman? Is it not enough that the Bukoyemskis will come to him as suitors? Let him beware! He is old, death is not far away; St. Peter may jam the old fellow’s fingers in the gates of heaven.

Take our part, O St. Peter, and say to him: 'You were not kind to my kinsmen during your life, therefore you'll have to kiss the dog in the snout.' Tell it to him after his death. But we will not permit him to scoff at us, anyway. How? Only because we have no riches we will be treated with disdain and dealt with roughly, like slaves! Is this the reward for our service to the country, for our blood, for our wounds? Oh, my brethren! God's orphans! more than one injustice came across us during our life, but none was more severe than this!"

"True, true!" replied Lukash, Marek and Matvey, plaintively.

And again tears gushed abundantly down their cheeks. But soon the Bukoyemskis grew indignant once more: it seemed to them that nobles could not leave such an insult unpunished.

Marek, the most impetuous of the brothers, was the first to remind them about it.

"It is inconvenient to call him out to fight a duel with swords," he said, "because he is old and he has but one arm; but if he should slight us we must take vengeance. What are we to do?"

"Well, this we'll decide to-morrow," said Ciprianowicz. "The fire has gone out in the fireplace, and it is past midnight. Our beds are made near the wall, and we must take a rest, for we worked enough during the day in the cold."

Indeed, the fire had gone out, and it became dark in the room, so that the host's advice suited the Bukoyemskis.

The conversation continued for another minute, but it became more and more languid; then whispered prayers, interrupted by deep sighs, were heard in the room.

The wood in the fireplace was now covered with ashes, and it began to turn black; from time to time something

creaked in the smouldering fire-sticks, and a cricket in the corner answered in a plaintive voice.

Then resounded the noise caused by boots thrown down on the floor, then a brief silence followed, and soon a loud snoring of the four brethren filled the room.

But the young Ciprianowicz could not fall asleep, because all his thoughts were turning around Panna Seninska, like bees around a flower. True, he closed his eyes once or twice, but saw that it was of no avail, and he thought:

"I'll go out and see whether there is a light in her room yet."

And he went out.

There was no light in the windows of Panna Seninska's room, and only the light of the moon quivered upon the uneven window-panes as upon running water.

The entire world was hushed in such deep slumber that even the snow seemed to have fallen asleep in the greenish abyss of the moonlight.

"Do you know that you are paradise to me?" whispered the young Ciprianowicz, gazing at the silvery window of the girl.

The old Pan Ciprianowicz, being naturally hospitable, spared no entreaties and adjurations to have the guests stay as long as possible in Edlinka. He even knelt before Pani Vinicka, which was not a very easy thing for him to do, because he was suffering from a slight but nevertheless annoying attack of gout. But the entreaties were of no avail. Pan Pongowski persisted in having his way—to leave at noon for home; and in the end they had to consent to it, especially because, according to his words, he was expecting certain guests. And thus he started out before noon. It was a cold, clear day. The weather was admirable. The icicles on the trees and the snow in the fields were covered with thousands of sparks, which glittered in

the sun so brilliantly that the eyes could hardly bear the glare which was reflected both from the sky and the earth. The horses went at a lively pace, the sleigh-slides creaked upon the hardened snow; the curtains of the coach-windows were drawn aside, and every now and then the pink, little face of Panna Seninska, with cheerful eyes and her little nose reddened from the frost, looked out of the window—a really charming little portrait in a frame. And she rode like a princess, for the coach was surrounded by “honorable guards,” composed of the Bukoyemskis and the young Ciprianowicz. The young people, seated on fine horses belonging to the estate of Edlinka (for the Bukoyemskis had either sold or pawned their own horses), caracoled beside the coach, now throwing their horses on their haunches, now letting them go ahead at such speed that lumps of snow, torn from the frozen ground by the hoofs of the horses, whistled in the air like a stone hurled with force.

Pan Pongowski was, perhaps, not particularly pleased with these “honorable guards,” and before starting even asked the knights not to trouble themselves, because the road was safe in the daytime, and that there were no robbers in these forests; but when the knights insisted that they must escort the ladies, Pan Pongowski had no other way but, paying politeness in return for politeness, to invite them to Belchonchki. He was also promised by the old Ciprianowicz that he would visit Belchonchki within a few days, for, being an old man, it was not so easy for him to leave the house at once.

The journey progressed imperceptibly; the knights exercised their skill on horseback, while Panna Seninska kept exhibiting her little face in the coach-windows. They stopped, after covering half the way, in order to rest their horses at the inn bearing the rather ominous name “Brigandage.” Next to the inn was a blacksmith’s shop. The

blacksmith was at this time shoeing horses, and near the inn stood several peasant sleds and thin, poor horses.

Various people flocked out of the inn to look at the coach, which was surrounded by men on horseback, and they stopped a little distance away. Those were not peasants, but townspeople from Koseniz, who made pots in the summer, and who traveled from village to village in the winter selling their wares, especially during certain holidays. It seemed to them that some great dignitary was in the coach, so they removed their caps and looked on with great interest.

The occupants of the coach, warmly clad, did not come out; the riders also remained on their horses; only Pan Pongowski's servant went to the inn with a bottle of wine to warm it there. In the meantime Pan Pongowski called the potters over to the coach and began to question them: whence they were coming, whither they were going, and whether they had not met danger on the road.

"Oh, no; no danger threatened us, your lordship!" replied an old man. "But we go in a crowd, and by day. We are awaiting here our people from Pshitik and other places. The peasants may also come in time, and if we'll have fifteen or twenty cart-loads, then we'll travel at night, also; if not, we won't, although we never start without sticks."

"So nothing has happened on the roads?"

"One Jew was devoured by wolves in broad daylight. He had geese in his wagon: nothing but the feathers remained on the road, and of the man and horse nothing but the bones were left. And this morning a noble came here on foot; he sat all night long in a pine-tree. He says that his horse fell, and that wolves tore him to pieces before his eyes. He became so stiff in the tree that he can hardly talk, and now he is sleeping."

Pan Pongowski turned to the knights:

"Do you hear, gentlemen?"

"Yes."

"We'll have to wake him up and ask him. He remained without a horse—how can we leave him here? My servant could sit down together with the postilion on one of the off-horses, and we could thus spare a horse for the poor fellow. You say he is a Polish noble. Perhaps he is from afar."

"And he must have been hastening somewhere, since he rode at night and alone," said Stanislaw Ciprianowicz. "I'll go and wake him up and find out."

But this proved superfluous, because at this moment the servant came out with the tray, on which were goblets of steaming wine, and, nearing the coach, said:

"Allow me to announce to your lordship that Pan Tachewski is here."

"Pan Tachewski? How the deuce did he come here?"

"Pan Tachewski?" repeated Panna Seninska.

"He is getting ready and will come out right away," explained the servant. "He almost upset my tray when he learned that you were here."

"And who was asking you about the tray?"

The servant became silent, as though he had lost his voice; and Pan Pongowski took a goblet of wine, took one draught, then another, and said to Ciprianowicz, with some dissatisfaction:

"It is an acquaintance of ours—and—somewhat of a neighbor—from Charna—and, to a certain degree, a mad-cap and a hare-brained fellow—of those Tachewskis who once upon a time were almost in the entire command of the army——"

The explanation was interrupted by the appearance of Pan Tachewski, who advanced to the coach with rapid

strides, but with a shade of timidity on his face. He was a young man of medium height, with beautiful black eyes, thin as a rake, and his head was covered with a cap which must have remembered the days of Bathory. He had on a gray coat lined with sheepskin, and yellow Swedish boots with huge boot-legs, reaching up to his hips. In Poland nobody wore such boots any more: evidently they were a war trophy of the times of Yan Kasimir, now taken from the warehouse because of necessity. As he advanced he looked alternately at Pan Pongowski and at Panna Seninska, and smiled, thus showing, white, strong teeth; but his smile was mournful and his face seemed somewhat confused.

"I am ineffably happy," he said, stopping before the coach and bowing politely, "that I find you and the esteemed ladies enjoying good health, for the road is not yet altogether safe, of which I have convinced myself."

"Cover your head, or your ears will freeze," said Pan Pongowski, bitterly. "We thank you for your solicitude. But what makes you roam about the forest?"

Tachewski cast a penetrating glance at Panna Seninska, as though he wanted to ask, "Perhaps you know what makes me do it?" But, seeing that she lowered her eyes and that she was biting the ribbons of her hood, he answered, in a firmer voice:

"Simply so. I felt like seeing how the moon shines in the forest."

"A fine desire. And your horse was killed by wolves?"

"They only finished killing him, for I almost killed him myself."

"I know. And you sat all night on a pine, like a fool."

At this point the Bukoyemskis burst into such deafening roars of laughter that the horses squatted down on their hind legs, and Tachewski turned around and began to

measure them with his eyes; in his eyes was a flash as cold as ice and sharp as a dagger.

Then he said to Pongowski:

“Not like a fool, but like a Polish noble deprived of his horse, at whom your lordship may laugh, but it may not be particularly well with anybody else that does it.”

“Oho! Oho! Oho!” exclaimed the Bukoyemskis in a chorus, approaching him on their horses. Their faces grew dim for a minute and their mustaches began to move; but Tachewski again began to measure them with his eyes, tossing his head up as he did so.

Then Pan Pongowski cried in a stern and commanding voice, as though he was the commander of them all:

“Please—without any quarrels! This is Pan Tachewski,” he added, more softly, after a while, turning to the knights, “and these are Pan Ciprianowicz and Pan Bukoyemskis, to whom, I may say, we owe our lives, for we were also attacked by wolves last night. *Inesperati*, they came to our assistance, but just at the right moment.”

“At the right moment!” repeated Panna Seninska, with emphasis, and cast a grateful look at Ciprianowicz. And Tachewski’s cheeks reddened, his eyes grew dim, and, with immeasurable sadness in his voice, he said:

“At the right moment, because there were many of them, and they were lucky in having good horses; and as for my Wallach, the wolves are by this time gnashing their teeth over him, and I have lost my last friend. But”—he glanced at the Bukoyemskis gratefully—“may your hands be blessed for doing that which I would have done from the depths of my soul; but God has not ordered it thus.”

Panna Seninska was inconstant, like every woman, and perhaps she began to feel sorry for Pan Tachewski; for her eyes softened and began to blink, and she asked, in an altogether different tone:

"Old Wallach? O God, how I loved him, and how well he knew me! O God!"

Tachewski looked at her with profound gratitude.

"He knew you—he knew you!"

"And you, Pan Yazko, don't worry too much!"

"I worried before, while on horseback, and now I will worry, traveling on foot. But may God reward you for your kind words."

"Meanwhile sit down on Mishasti," said Pan Pongowski. "The servant will sit down beside the postilion, or he'll find a place behind the coach. We have a spare fur coat—put it on, because you were freezing all night, and now a new frost is beginning to pinch."

"No," replied Tachewski; "I purposely brought no fur coat along. I feel warm."

"Well, then, let's start."

And after a while they started off. Yatzek Tachewski stationed himself at the left window of the coach, Stanislaw Ciprianowicz at the other one, so that Panna Seninska, sitting on the front seat, could easily look at both of them without turning her head.

But the Bukoyemskis were displeased with Tachewski's presence, and they were angry because he took his place by the coach-window; therefore they came together in a crowd, so that their horses almost touched heads, and they began to talk the matter over among themselves.

"He looked at us with contempt," said Matvey. "As God is holy, he wanted to degrade us."

"And now he turned his horse's back toward us. What will you say to this?"

"Why, his horse could not face us, for a horse cannot go backward, like a crab. But that he is making love to the young lady—that is true," remarked Marek.

"That's true. Look how he is cringing. If the girth would burst now he'd fly off the saddle."

"He'll not fly off, the devil take him, for he can ride well, and the belts of the girth are strong."

"Look, look! He's again smiling to her."

"Well, dear brethren, are we going to allow this?"

"Never! Under no circumstances! She's not for us—true! But do you remember what we decided last night?"

"Of course! And he must have found out about it, the cunning brute, and now he's courting her to spite us."

"He's making sport of our orphanhood and poverty!"

"Well, he's not a great Pan—on some one else's side-horse!"

"But we are not on our own, either——"

"But we still have one horse left, so that if three of us stay at home the fourth may go even to war; while this fellow hasn't even a saddle of his own, because the wolves tore it to pieces with their teeth."

"And he's turning up his nose yet. What does he want of us, pray?"

"We must ask that of him."

"Right away. But diplomatically, so as not to offend the old man, Pongowski. And when he answers, we'll challenge him to fight a duel."

"Which one of us will do it?"

"I, of course, because I am the oldest. I'll just take off the icicles from my mustaches—and march!"

"Look out; remember well what he will tell you."

"Like God's prayer—I'll repeat it all."

Saying this, the oldest of the Bukoyemskis began to take off the icicles which had formed on his mustaches; and then he rode up to Tachewski's side-horse and said;

"Most honorable sir!"

"What is it you wish?" asked Tachewski, turning his head away from the coach-window unwillingly.

"Have you anything against us?"

Tachewski regarded him for a minute in astonishment; then he replied:

"Nothing."

And, shrugging his shoulder, he again turned his face toward the coach. Bukoyemski rode for some time in silence, thinking whether he should return to his brethren and give an account of the answer he received, or whether he should try again. The latter seemed to him to be the better course, and he said again:

"If you think that you will succeed in something, then I will say to you the same you said to me: 'Nothing.'"

Tachewski began to feel unpleasant and bored. He understood that Bukoyemski was picking a quarrel with him, and at this moment he did not feel like answering any quibbling whatever. Nevertheless, he decided that it was necessary to say something in reply, and that it should be something that would cut the conversation at once.

And he asked:

"Are those your brothers?"

"Of course; whose then?"

"Then you had better decide together; and now don't interrupt this pleasant conversation we are holding."

Bukoyemski rode another ten or fifteen steps by his side, then turned his horse back.

"What did he say to you? Tell us everything." The brethren began to question him.

The oldest brother repeated his conversation with Tachewski. They remained dissatisfied.

"You didn't hit him in the right spot," said Lukash. "You should have hit his horse with the stirrup in the belly, or you should have said something insulting to him."

"For instance, thus: 'Now that the wolves have devoured your horse, you ought to buy a goat for yourself in Pshitik.' "

"There's plenty of time for this. What did he mean by saying, 'Are those your brethren?' "

"Perhaps he wanted to say, 'Are they also such fools as you are?' "

"Of course! I swear to God that's so!" exclaimed Marek. "There could have been nothing else in his mind! Well, what are we to do now?"

"His death or ours! We must tell Stanislaw about it!"

"It isn't necessary, for if we give him the girl he must challenge Tachewski; and we don't want this—we must challenge him first."

"When?"

"We can't do it at Pongowski's. And here is Belchonchki."

Indeed, Belchonchki was very near. At the border of the forest stood a cross with the image of the Saviour, between two spears, erected by Pan Pongowski. On the right, where the road turned beyond the woods, were vast meadows with a strip of alder-trees stretching along the river; on the other side the bare tops of tall trees and the smoke rising from peasants' huts were visible.

Soon the travelers found themselves amidst various structures, and when they went past the fences and farm-houses the house of Pan Pongowski arose before their eyes.

The wide court-yard was surrounded by an old, dilapidated fence. No enemy came to these places from time immemorial, and therefore nobody took any care about fortifying the settlement. In the yard stood two breeding-cages for pigeons. On one side was the wing of the house, on the other barns, warehouses and a cheese-dairy, made of thin logs and boards. In front of the house were little

posts with iron rings for tying horses; on each of these posts was a cap of frozen snow. The house was queer, large, with a straw-covered roof. Hunting dogs swarmed about in the yard, and among them walked back and forth a tamed stork with a broken wing, who had evidently just come out of the house in order to take a walk and breathe the frosty air.

The newcomers were expected in the house, for Pan Pongowski had sent a servant in advance to notify the household that he was coming home. That same servant came out and, bowing, said:

“The Pan Starost of Raigrod, Grotus, is here.”

“My God!” exclaimed Pan Pongowski. “Has he been waiting long?”

“It isn’t quite an hour yet. He wanted to go away, but I told him that we were expecting your lordship every minute.”

“You have done well.”

Then he turned to his guests:

“I ask you humbly! Pan Grotus is a relative of mine. I suppose he has just returned from Warsaw from his brother, because he was chosen as a delegate to the political assembly. Come in, please! Come in!”

A minute later and they were in the dining-room, before the Starost of Raigrod, whose head almost reached the ceiling, for he was even taller than the Bukoyemskis. Pan Grotus was a stately nobleman, with intelligent eyes, with the face and bald head of a statesman, and a forehead marked with a scar over his nose, between his eyebrows. This scar, resembling a wrinkle, gave his face a stern and something like an angry expression. However, he smiled graciously to Pan Pongowski and opened his arms to meet him.

"Yes, it is I, the guest, who welcome the host to his own house."

Pan Pongowski clasped his neck with his arm and replied:

"What a guest, what a dear guest! May God grant you strength, because you came to see me! What's news there?"

"*De privatis* good, and *de publicis* also good, because war is on."

"How? We? Already?"

"We—not yet, but an alliance with His Highness the Emperor will be signed in March, and then war is imminent."

Although rumors about a war against Turkey were on foot before New Year's, and though there were people who spoke of it as being imminent, yet the confirmation of this rumor from the lips of a personage so important, and one standing in such close relations with State affairs as Pan Grotus, produced a profound impression on Pan Pongowski and his young guests. And no sooner had the host introduced them to the Starost than a conversation was started about the war, about Tekel and about the bloody conflicts in Hungary, whence the fire spread even to Ragusa and to Poland. It must be a terrible war, before which the King of Rome and all German lands were trembling.

Pan Grotus, well acquainted with the political situation, said that Porta would move half of Asia and the whole of Africa to start out with such a force as the world had not seen heretofore. But these suppositions spoilt nobody's humor; on the contrary, the youths listened cheerfully, because they had grown tired of the long rest at home, and war opened before them a field of glory, of service, and even of advantages.

Pan Matvey Bukoyemski, on hearing the words of the

Starost of Raigrod, struck himself a blow on the knee so that an echo resounded throughout the room, and said:

“Half of Asia and what else there? How important! As though this is our first time!”

“It’s not the first time, you are quite right,” replied the host, whose stern face suddenly lit up with joy. “If these tidings are true, then corresponding orders will surely be announced and a call for troops will be issued. Would to God it were so! Would to God it were as soon as possible! Near Chotino lived a blind old man named Devientkiewicz. His sons set the spear for him for the attack, and he struck the Janizaries like everybody else. But I have no son.”

“My dearest, if anybody has a right to stay home, it is you,” said the Starost. “It is bad to have no son for the war, it is still worse to have no eyes, but it is worst of all to have no arm.”

“I learned to handle a sword with both hands,” replied Pan Gedeon, “and I can hold the reins in my teeth. I wish to fall—to fall in battle against the pagans—in the field—not out of personal revenge—no! I’ll tell you why. I am speaking sincerely. I am old; I have seen a great deal, I have thought a great deal; I have witnessed so much human malice, so many petty affairs, so much disorder in our Republic, so much insubordination, so many broken Diets, so much lawlessness, that, I will tell you, I have more than once asked the Lord in despair, ‘Wherefore, O Lord, hast Thou created our Republic and our nation?’ And now, when the pagan sea is rising, when the hideous viper opens its jaws in order to devour the whole world and Christianity, when, as you say, the Cæsar of Rome and all the German lands are shuddering before the thunder-cloud—only now I have understood wherefore God has created us and what obligations He has charged us with. The Turks themselves are saying so. Let others tremble—we shall not

tremble! Let our purest blood flow on to the very last drop, and let also my blood join it. Amen!"

Pan Pongowski's eyes began to flash and he became intensely agitated; but he did not allow the tears to wet his cheeks, perhaps because he had already shed all his tears before, or maybe because he was stern to himself as well as he was to others. Nevertheless Pan Grotus embraced him, kissed him on both cheeks, and said:

"True, true! There is a great deal of wickedness in our midst, and by our blood alone will we be able to atone for our wrongs before the Lord. It is the service, it is the guardianship, which God has entrusted to us—it is the predestination of our people. And the time is nearing when we shall produce the evidence of this service. Yes! There is also intimation on the part of the pagans that they will descend on Vienna. Thither we shall go, and there we will prove to the whole world that we are but the soldiers of Christ, created but for the defense of our faith and the cross! All nations that have lived peacefully by our side will see clearly what guardians we are; and, with the help of God, our deserts and our glory will last as long as the world lasts."

At these words the youths were seized with enthusiasm. The Bukoyemskis jumped up from their places and cried:

"God grant it! When will they call for troops? God grant it!"

And Ciprianowicz said:

"Our soul is yearning for it! We are ready even to-day."

Only Tachewski was silent, and his face did not brighten, and the news which had filled all hearts with joy was to him but a source of pain and sorrow. His thoughts and his eyes followed fixedly the young Seninska, who fluttered merrily around the feast-table, and seemed to say to her with reproach and immeasurable sorrow;

“If not for you, I would have gone to some magnate’s castle, and, though I would not find riches there, I could get some armor and a horse, and I would enter some regiment in search of death or fame. It is your beauty, your glances, the kind words you occasionally gave me, that have caused me to stay here, on a few acres of land, and almost die of starvation. And on your account I have not seen the world, and I remained an unpolished fool. What wrong have I done that you have taken me captive both body and soul? I preferred to die rather than not to see you for a whole year, and hastening to save you I lost my last horse; and yet you laughed at me and looked affectionately at somebody else. And now—what will I do? The war will begin soon. Shall I become a servant, or shall I disgrace myself and become a foot-soldier? What have I done that you have no pity for me at all?”

Thus grieved Yatzek Tachewski, who felt his misery all the more acutely because he was a descendant of a renowned family of knights, although he was hopelessly poor. It was not true that Panna Seninska had no pity for him, but it was true that, thanks to her, he never saw the world and stayed as in a bear’s den, possessing two serfs, and often unable to satisfy the most essential necessities of life. He was seventeen years old and she thirteen when he fell passionately in love with her, and continued to love her thus for five years, growing fonder and fonder of her from year to year, but also growing ever sadder, for he had no hope. Pan Pongowski at first sheltered him willingly, as a descendant of a renowned family, to whom entire districts had belonged in days gone by; but soon he reconsidered the matter and became harsh toward him, and sometimes even cruel. True, he did not shut the doors of his house to him, but kept him at a distance from the girl, because he had special hopes and prospects on her account. And as for

the girl herself, she tested all her powers on Tachewski and was amused by his love, just as girls are amused by flowers in the meadows. Sometimes one of them will bend down and pluck one flower and plait it in her braid, and then cast it away and forget it; and then she starts to look for new ones. Tachewski had never spoken to her of his love; but she was well aware of it, although she made believe that she did not know and that she did not care to know what was happening to him. She led him by the nose as she pleased. When one day bees attacked her she hid herself under his cloak and pressed to his bosom; but later she could not forgive herself for this very thing for two days. Occasionally she treated him almost with contempt, and when it seemed to him that all was lost, she once more filled his heart with immeasurable joy and hope by a single affectionate glance, by a single word of kindness. If it happened that on account of some wedding, or birthday, or some great hunting party, he did not appear in Belchonchki, the young lady longed to see him; but when he came again she amused herself and caused him suffering. He experienced the most painful moments when guests came to Belchonchki, and particularly if among them was a polite and handsome young man. Then Yatzek Tachewski thought that the heart of the young girl held not the slightest compassion for him. And now he thought thus on account of Ciprianowicz, and all that Pan Grotus had said about the war poured still greater bitterness into his overflowing cup of painful thoughts.

Tachewski had learned to control himself in Pan Pongowski's house; nevertheless he could hardly sit through the supper while he was listening to the conversation between Panna Seninska and Stanislaw Ciprianowicz. The poor young man noticed that she rather liked the new acquaintance, because he was brave, amiable and not at all foolish.

The conversation at the table turned to the future formation of the army. Ciprianowicz, having learned from Pan Grotus that he might levy volunteers himself in these places, suddenly turned to Panna Seninska and asked:

"Which regiment do you prefer?"

She looked at his shoulders and said:

"The regiment of the hussars."

"Because of the wings?"

"Yes. I saw the hussars one day, and I thought it a heavenly army. I dreamed about them two nights after that."

"I don't know whether you'll dream of me if I become a hussar, but I am sure that I will dream of you—and also with wings."

"Why so?"

"Because it is natural with an angel."

Panna Seninska lowered her eyes so that the shade of her lashes fell on her pink cheeks, and after a brief pause she said:

"Enter the regiment of the hussars."

Tachewski set his teeth together tightly and passed his hand over his perspiring forehead; but not a word, not a glance did he receive from her throughout the supper. And only when everybody arose from the table, and the chairs were moved into the room, Panna Seninska's sweet voice rang out near his ear:

"Are you also going to the war?"

"To fall! to fall!" replied Pan Yatzek.

In this answer rang such genuine grief that the voice of his beloved asked, as if with a shade of emotion:

"Why should you cause vexation to people?"

"No one will mourn for me."

"How do you know?" rang out the girlish voice for the third time.

Then she quickly fluttered away to the other guests, like a wonderful vision of dreamland; and then she blossomed up, like a pink flower, in the other corner of the room.

Meantime the older people sat down after supper to drink mead, and, having exhausted all they had to say on public affairs, they began to discuss private matters. Pan Grotus followed Panna Seninska with his eyes for some time, and said, with emotion:

"That's what I call a candle! Just look at the youths rushing toward her like night-butterflies toward fire. And there's nothing surprising about it; if it were not for our years we would also rush after her like this."

But Pan Pongowski waved his hand disdainfully.

"Night-butterflies, gray butterflies, nothing more!"

"How's that? Tachewski, for instance, he's not of the gray butterflies."

"But he is a pauper. Nor are the Bukoyemskis of the gray ones. They even claim relationship to Apostle Peter. That may be of use to them in the heavenly kingdom, but meanwhile all the four brothers serve in the royal forestry like ordinary foresters."

Pan Grotus wondered at the ties of the Bukoyemski family no less than Pan Pongowski had wondered, and he began to inquire for particulars about them; but in the end he burst into laughter, and said:

"St. Peter is a great apostle, and I do not want to belittle his qualities, especially that, feeling the approach of old age, I shall soon have recourse to his kindness; but, between me and you, one cannot boast of such a relative. He was a plain fisherman, nothing more. St. Joseph, who was a descendant of King David—well, that's a different matter."

"I say that there is not one suitable for the girl—and not only of those you see now under my roof, but even in the entire district."

"And the one that sits just now near Pani Vinicka? He certainly looks like a knight."

"Ciprianowicz? Yes, he's a decent fellow, but he is of Armenian descent, and his nobility counts but three or four generations back."

"Why, then, do you invite them? Cupid is a deceiver, and before you'll have time to look around he'll make a terrible mess for you."

Pan Pongowski had explained, while introducing the guests to Pan Grotus, how indebted he was to them; and now he once more told him all the details of how the wolves had attacked them, and how help came to them; wherefore, out of gratitude, he had to invite his saviors to his house.

"True, true," assented Pan Grotus; "but Cupid in his turn can play a terrible trick, for the girl's blood is not water."

"Oh, she's a cunning marten," replied Pan Pongowski. "She may bite somebody, but she'll manage to escape, and not everybody will succeed in catching her. Such is the inherent quality of noble blood that it must not yield—it must manage and command. I myself do not belong to those that are easily led by the nose, and yet sometimes I am forced to let her have her way. True, I am greatly indebted to the Seninkas; but, even leaving this aside, when she stands before me, and throws her braid from one hand to the other, and bends her head and looks at me, then in most cases I will do whatever she pleases. And sometimes I think what an honor and what a heavenly blessing it is that the last offspring, the last representative of such a family is under my roof. You know, of course, about the Seninkas. All Podolia was theirs. Truth to tell, the Danislowiczs and the Zhulkewskis and the Sobieskis—they all grew up from them. His Highness the King must bear this in mind, all the more so because nothing

was left of all their immense estates; and if the girl will have something, it will be only that which will be left after me."

"And what will your relatives say?"

"The Pongowskis are very distant relatives, and they'll hardly be able to produce the necessary documents. Nevertheless, I am sometimes disturbed by the thought that after my death there may arise certain difficulties, trials, quarrels—as is usually the case with us. I feel most uneasy about the relatives of my wife, from whom I received a share of the inheritance, and, among other things, this Belchoncki."

"I shall not come out into this lawsuit," answered Grotus, with a smile, "but I am not responsible for the others."

"That's just it. I was preparing to go to Warsaw and ask the King himself to take the orphan under his protection, but his mind is now occupied with something altogether different."

"If you had a son the matter would be quite simple: to have him marry the girl."

Pan Pongowski cast such a look of suffering at the Starost of Raigrod that the latter stopped in the middle of the sentence. They were silent for a long time; then Pan Gedeon said, in a voice shaking with emotion:

"My dearest, I could say, together with Virgil: '*Infandum jubes renovare dolorem*'. Yes, the matter would be simple; and I'll tell you that were it not for this 'simple matter' I would probably be dead long ago. My son was captured by Ordinians while he was yet a child. It often happened that people returned from the pagan captivity when all had long forgotten them. For years I was expecting the miracle to happen—for years I have lived by this hope. And even when I drink a little I think, 'Per-

haps!" God is greater than human expectations. But the moments of hope are brief, and the pain is acute and incessant. No! Why deceive myself? My blood will not blend with the blood of the Seninskas, and if my relatives should take away my property after I am gone, then the last offspring of the family to whom I owe everything will remain in the world without a crust of bread."

They again began to drink in silence. Pan Grotus was wondering how to soften the pain which he had caused to Pongowski unintentionally and how to console him in his grief. Finally something which seemed to him a happy thought came into his mind.

"Eh," said he, "there are remedies for everything, and you, my dearest, can make sure of the crust of bread for the girl without any obstacles."

"In which way?" asked Pan Pongowski, with some uneasiness.

"Has it never happened that old people married even minors? *Exemplum* from history: The great Hetman Konecpolski, who was older than you, married a very young girl. It is also true that he died during the first night after the wedding. But Pan Makowski, your royal cup-bearer of Radom, and Pan Rudnecki, did not die, though they were seventy years old. And you are a strong man. If God will bless you with posterity, so much the better; if not, then you will leave the young widow well provided, and she will then marry the man that she will choose for herself."

It is hard to tell whether such thoughts had ever before entered Pongowski's head; but, having listened to the words of the Starost of Raigrod, he became intensely confused, and, pouring out the mead for his guests, his hand trembled and the noble beverage was spilled on the floor.

"Let's drink!" he said. "Here's to the success of the Christian arms!"

"That's a different thing!" replied Pan Grotus, following the course of his own thoughts; "and you had better consider what I told you, because it seems to me I have hit upon the right thing."

"Well, what's the use of talking? Let's drink another."

Their conversation was interrupted by the moving of arm-chairs near the large table. Pani Vinicka and Panna Seninska were intending to go to bed. The ringing voice of the young girl, resounding like a silver bell, began to repeat, "Good-night, good-night"; then she made a curtsy before Pan Grotus, kissed Pan Pongowski on the hand, rubbed her little nose and forehead against his shoulder like a kitten and departed. Ciprianowicz, the Bukoyemskis and Tachewski went out after the ladies. Only the two old men remained in the room, and they were talking for a long time, for Pan Pongowski ordered a servant to bring out another bottle of the best mead.

## CHAPTER II.

WHETHER it was a coincidence, or whether it was a trick on the part of the young lady, no one knew; but, however it was, the four Bukoyemskis were given a large room in the wing of the house, and another, a smaller room, was given to Ciprianowicz and Tachewski. This agitated them, and, not knowing what to begin to say to one another, they immediately began to read their prayers, and they read them longer than usual. But the prayers were ended and an awkward silence ensued. This was painful to both, for although they had no friendly feelings toward each other, they nevertheless realized that they must not betray themselves, and that at least during their stay in Pan Pongowski's house they must stick to diplomacy.

Tachewski unfastened his sword, unsheathed it, examined its edge by the fireplace, and began to wipe it with a handkerchief.

"After the frost," he said, half to himself, half to Ciprianowicz, "it will turn rusty in a warm room at once."

"It must have frozen well last night," replied Ciprianowicz.

He said it without any thought of malice, merely because he had recalled that Tachewski had spent the night before in the terrible cold; but Pan Yatzek immediately leaned the point of his sword against the floor and stared penetratingly into his eyes.

"Are you referring to the fact that I passed the night on the pine-tree?"

"Yes," replied Stanislav, good-naturedly; "there you had no fireplace."

"And what would you have done in my place?"

Ciprianowicz was about to say, "The same," but, as the question was asked in a harsh tone, he said:

"Why should I break my head about this since I was not there?"

Wrath flashed over Pan Yatzek's face, and to control himself he began to blow his breath upon the sword, to wipe it more energetically, and finally sheathed it again and said:

"God sends adventures and misfortunes!"

And his eyes, which had a moment ago flashed with anger, once more assumed their usual sad expression. He recalled his only friend, the horse, which had been torn by the wolves.

By this time the door was opened and the four Bukoyemskis entered the room.

"The frost is milder and it is getting foggy," said Matvey.

"Yes, it is getting foggy," repeated Yan.

And only now they noticed Tachewski, whom they had not noticed as they entered.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lukash, turning to Ciprianowicz. "So that's the company you are in?"

All the four brothers put their arms akimbo and stared at Tachewski defiantly.

And Pan Tachewski seized an arm-chair, placed it in the middle of the room, turned quickly toward the Bukoyemskis, then seated himself on the chair astride, leaned his arms on the arms of the chair, lifted his head and cast at them, too, a look of defiance.

Thus they looked at one another—Yatzek, with his feet

in Swedish boots, wide apart; the Bukoyemskis, shoulder to shoulder, tall, terrible, quarrelsome.

Ciprianowicz saw that a fight was near, and yet he felt like laughing. Figuring that he could at any moment stop this quarrel, he allowed the enemies to exchange glances.

"What a self-reliant fellow!" said he to himself, thinking of Tachewski. "He looks as though he doesn't feel confused at all!"

And the silence was protracted, both unbearable and ridiculous at the same time. Pan Yatzek understood this, because he was the first to break it.

"Be seated, my dear fellows," he said; "not only do I allow you to do it, but I even ask you to do it."

The Bukoyemskis exchanged glances, amazed and confused by such an unexpected turn of affairs.

"How? What is it? What does he think of himself?"

"I ask you to sit down!" repeated Tachewski, pointing at the bench.

"We are standing because we like to stand. Do you understand?"

"What superfluous formality!"

"What formality?" cried Lukash. "What are you playing, the bishop or the senator, you Pompeii?"

Tachewski did not stir from his place, only his shoulders twitched, as though from a wave of laughter which suddenly rushed upon him.

"Why do you call me Pompeii?" he asked.

"Because you deserve it."

"Perhaps it is because you are a fool?"

"Strike, whoever believes in God!" shouted Yan.

But Pan Yatzek seemed to have grown tired of this conversation, for he jumped over to the Bukoyemskis.

"Listen, you turbulent fellows," he said, in a voice as cold as steel, "what is it you wish from me?"

"Blood!" cried Matvey Bukoyemski.

"You'll not slip away from our hands!" yelled Marek.

"Come forward right away!" added Lukash, seizing his sword.

But Ciprianowicz immediately took them apart.

"I'll not permit it!" he cried in his turn. "This is not our house. We are guests here."

"True," affirmed Tachewski; "this is not our house, and I will not cause any disagreeableness to Pan Pongowski. I'll not slash you to pieces under his roof, but therefore I'll look for you to-morrow."

"We'll find you to-morrow!" thundered Matvey.

"You've been picking a quarrel, you've interfered with me all day long—why? I do not know—for I don't know you, nor do you know me. But you shall pay me for this. I'll stand up not only against four, but even against ten, for offending me."

"Come, come, even one will do. It seems that you have not heard about the Bukoyemskis!" said Yan.

But Tachewski turned around to Ciprianowicz.

"I spoke of four," he said; "but perhaps you will also join these knights?"

Ciprianowicz bowed politely.

"Since you ask about it——"

"But we are first, and older than you. We'll not withdraw from this. We have promised her to you, and we'll kill any one who will stand in your way."

Tachewski cast a quick glance at the Bukoyemskis; in a minute all became clear to him, and he turned pale.

"So, that's the case, sir knight?" he said, addressing Ciprianowicz. "So, you keep hirelings and you hide yourself behind their swords? What's the use of discussing this? Of course, this is a surer and less dangerous way,

but whether it is the way of a noble or a knight is another question. Fie, what society I have fallen into!"

Though Ciprianowicz was by nature soft-hearted, on hearing this shameful accusation he nevertheless flew into a passion, the veins stood out on his forehead, his eyes began to flash lightnings. He desperately gnashed his teeth and clasped the handle of his sword.

"Come forward, come forward this minute!" he cried, in a tone suffocating from anger.

The swords flashed and it became light in the room from the steel, on which fell the reflection of the smoldering wood in the fireplace. But three of the Bukoyemskis, rushing between the opponents, stood as a wall between them, while the fourth seized Ciprianowicz by the arms and began to shout:

"Stanislav, for God's sake, restrain yourself! We come first!"

"We come first," repeated his brethren.

"Leave me alone!" cried Ciprianowicz, hoarsely.

"We come first!"

"Leave me alone!"

"Hold Stanislav, and I'll get through with him in the meantime," suggested Matvey.

And grasping Tachewski by the hand, he began to draw him aside, in order to fight a duel at once. But Pan Yatzek's anger had already subsided; he freed his hand, replaced his sword into its sheath, and said:

"It is for me to choose who is to fight first, and where. Therefore I say to you: To-morrow, and not here, but in Virombki."

"No; you'll not slip away from us! Now, right away!" But Tachewski crossed his arms on his breast.

"Ah! You want to kill me under a strange roof, without a duel? Very well."

The brethren were seized with rage. They began to strike the floor with their heels, to pull their mustaches and to snuffle like bears.

But none of them dared to attack Tachewski, without bringing upon himself disgrace.

Tachewski stood a few minutes, as though expecting that they might jump on him; then he grasped his cap, put it on his head and said:

"Well, I am telling you now: To-morrow! You'll tell Pan Pongowski that you want to visit me, but find out how to get to Virombki. Beyond the stream there is a crucifix which was erected in the time of the plague. There I will wait for you at noon. May the devil take you!"

He uttered the last words as if with compassion; then he opened the door and went out.

In the yard he was surrounded by the dogs, which knew him well, and which began to wheedle about him. Involuntarily, Tachewski glanced at the posts under the windows, as though looking for his horse; but then, recalling that it wasn't there any more, he heaved a sigh, and, feeling the cold wind, he said to himself:

"Even the wind blows straight into a poor man's eyes. I'll go afoot."

And at this time the young Ciprianowicz wrung his hands for pain and anger, and he said to the Bukoyemskis, with terrible bitterness:

"Who has asked you about this? The bitterest enemy would not have disgraced me more than you with your kind service!"

The Bukoyemskis felt very sorry for him and began to embrace him in turn.

"Stashko!" said Matvey, "they've sent us a bottle from the house. For God's sake, don't worry!"

## CHAPTER III.

IT was gray outside yet when the priest Voinowski, with a lantern in his hand, was wending his way through the high snowbanks to his hares, to his pigeons and partridges, which he kept in a separate portion of his barn. A tamed fox, with a bell on her neck, followed him, and beside her walked a bright pug dog and a hedgehog, which in the priest's warm room resisted its customary winter sleep. All the four, slowly passing through the yard, found themselves before the straw roof of the barn, from which long icicles were hanging down. The lantern began to shake, the key creaked in the lock, the latch snapped, and the old man, together with his companions, entered the barn. After a minute had passed he seated himself on a stump, placed the lantern on another stump, and putting down before him a cloth bag filled with grain and with cabbage-leaves, which emitted a strong smell of the cellar, he began to throw it out on the floor, yawning loudly as he did so.

But before he had begun his work three hares already appeared from the dark corners of the barn, and then, by the light of the lantern, like sparkling glass beads, flashed the eyes of the pigeons and the partridges, which drew near to the old man, shaking their little heads on their thin necks. The pigeons, being the bolder, immediately began to pick the grain, while the partridges advanced cautiously, glancing now at the feed, now at the priest, now at the fox, with which, however, they had long been ac-

quainted. They had seen her every day, ever since they had been caught in the summer, while they were but little birds.

And the priest kept throwing the feed out of his bag, and at the same time mumbling, "Our Father——"

"*Pater noster, qui es in coelis, sanctificetur nomen——*"

Here he stopped and turned to the fox, which was rubbing against his side and trembling as if seized with fever.

"You are always quivering as soon as you see them. And every day the same. Learn to suppress your inborn sinful passions, because you are getting fine provisions and you experience no hunger. Where have I stopped?"

He closed his eyes, as though awaiting some answer; and as he heard none, he started anew:

"*Pater noster, qui es in coelis, sanctificetur nomen Tuum, adveniat regnum Tuum——*"

But here came a new pause.

"You're wheedling, wheedling," he said, lowering his hand on the fox's back. "Such is your nasty nature that you're not satisfied with eating alone, but you must also kill somebody. Filus, little dog, get a hold of his tail, and if he plays a trick on you, then bite him.—*Adveniat regnum Tuum.*—Oh, I know; you would also answer me that a man also *libenter perdices monducat*; but you must know that man at least during Lent subdues his desires, and in you evidently sits the soul of the godless Luther, because you are ready to eat meat even on Good Friday.—*Fiat voluntas Tua.*—Little hare, little hare, little hare—*sicut in coelo.*—Here's a leaf for each of you."

With these words the priest threw out the cabbage-leaves, and then the grain, and muttered even at the pigeons; though spring was still far off, they were moving about near one another, cooing. At last, when his bag was empty, the priest arose, lifted the lantern and was about to go,

when suddenly Tachewski appeared at the threshold of the barn.

"Ah, Yazus!" exclaimed the priest, "what are you doing here so early?"

Tachewski kissed him on the shoulder and answered:

"I have come to confession, Holy Father, and I should like to take the holy communion at the early mass."

"To confession? Very well; but what is it that has made you to be in such haste? Tell me at once; there must be something wrong here."

"I will tell you the whole truth. I am to fight a duel to-day, and as it is easier to come upon some disagreeableness when fighting with five knights than with one, I should like to clear my soul."

"With five knights? God! What have you done to them?"

"That's just the point—I've done nothing. They themselves have picked a quarrel with me and have challenged me."

"Who are they?"

"The Bukoyemskis, foresters, and Ciprianowicz from Edlinka."

"I know them! Come into the house, and you'll tell me how it all came about."

And they went. But in the middle of the yard the priest Voinowski suddenly stopped, looked fixedly into Tachewski's eyes and asked:

"Listen, Yatzek, *mulier* is in the case?"

Tachewski smiled sadly.

"Yes and no; it all began on her account, but she herself is innocent in the matter."

"Aha! Innocent! They are all innocent! And do you know what Ecclesiastes says about women?"

"I don't remember exactly, Holy Father."

"Nor do I remember; but whatever I don't remember I will read to you when we get home. '*Juveni,*' he says, '*amariorem morte mulierem, quae laqueus venatorum est et sagena cor ejus.*' And something else like it; but in the end: '*qui placet Deo, effugiet illam, qui autem peccator est, capietur ab illa.*' I have cautioned you not once, but more than ten times, not to stay in that house, and now you have this affair!"

"Oh, it is easier to caution than not to go there," said Tachewski, with a sigh.

"You'll not find anything good there."

"That's true," the young knight assented, softly.

They walked in silence. The priest's face was sad, because he loved Tachewski with all his soul. When, after the death of his father, who died from the plague, the boy remained alone in the world, without any near relatives, without any means, with but a few peasants in Virombki, the old man took him under his guardianship. He could give him no riches, because, possessing an angelic soul, he distributed to the poor all his poor income; but nevertheless he helped him somewhat, looked after him, taught him not only the various branches of science, but also knightly skill. Some time ago he had been a brave soldier, one of the friends and companions in arms of the renowned Volodiowski, served under Charnetzki, went through the entire Swedish campaign, and only after it was over, after a certain terrible circumstance, he became a priest. He loved Tachewski, and appreciated in him not only the descendant of a renowned family of knights, but also his noble soul, which was just as sad as his own. The priest was grieved painfully at Tachewski's dire poverty, and at his unfortunate love affair, because of which the young man, instead of seeking glory and bread in God's world, wasted his powers in this dull, lonely place, led a half-

peasant mode of life. Therefore the priest felt a certain antipathy for the entire household at Belchonchki, and this antipathy was intensified because Pan Pongowski was very stern toward his peasants.

The priest loved these "earth worms" very much—he loved them like the pupil of his eye; but, aside from this, he loved all that lives in the world—he loved those animals at which he grumbled, and the birds, and the fishes, even the frog family which croaks in the summer in the waters heated by the sun.

And yet it was not only an angel that walked in the priestly robe—it was also the former soldier; and when he learned that Tachewski was to fight a duel with five knights, he thought only of how the young man would distinguish himself and whether he would come out of this adventure unharmed.

He stopped again at the very door of the house and said:

"But I hope you'll not let them get the best of you. I have not concealed from you that which I know and which Volodiowski has taught me, have I?"

"I would not like to be cut into pieces," replied Tachewski, modestly, "because a great war with Turkey is to begin soon."

The eyes of the old man began to flash like stars. He seized Tachewski by the lapel of his coat and began to question him.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord! How do you know? Who told you?"

"Pan Grotus, the Starost," replied the young man.

The conversation between Yatzek and the priest lasted for a long time. Tachewski was confessing his sins for some time before mass, and when, after mass, they both found themselves in the priest's house and began to drink beer, the old man could not free himself from the thought

of the war against the pagans, and on this account began to complain of the deterioration of character and the decline of piety in the republic.

"My God!" he said. "Look, the field of glory and salvation is open, and you prefer to fight on account of your petty private affairs and cut each other to pieces! Having the opportunity to shed your blood in the defense of the cross and religion, you are ready to shed your brother's blood. And for whom? For what? On account of an insult, on account of a woman, or on account of some insignificant earthly matter. I know that in the republic it is an old, bad custom, and—*mea culpa*—I myself yielded to it in the days of my sinful and senseless youth. In the winter quarters, where the army is doing nothing except drinking in excess, hardly a day passes without a duel, notwithstanding that the church condemns it and the law prosecutes it. At any rate it is a sin, and before the Turkish it is a still graver sin, because there each and every sword will be necessary, and each and every sword will serve the true religion and the true God. That is why our King—*defensor fidei*—hates duels, and before the enemy, on the battlefield, where martial law is declared, he punishes severely for it."

"During his youth the King himself fought more than one or two duels," replied Tachewski. "Besides, what am I to do? I have not challenged them—they have challenged me. Is there any other way out of it?"

"True, you cannot decline! And that is just why my soul revolts within me. But God is on the side of the guiltless."

Tachewski began to bid him farewell, because there was less than two hours till noon, and the road he was to travel was long.

"Wait a while," said the priest Voinowski. "I'll not

leave you off like this. I will order the workman to cover the sleigh with straw and go to the place of the duel. If they don't know anything about your quarrel at Pongowski's they will not send any help; and how will it be in case one of them, or you, should receive a serious wound? Have you thought about this?"

"I have not—and in all probability they have not thought of it, either."

"Well, there, you see! I will also go, but I shall not be present at the duel—I'll stop in your place in Virombki. I'll take the holy sacrament along with me, and a boy with a bell—who knows what may happen? It is unbecoming for a clergyman to be a witness of such affairs, but were it not for this I should have gone there willingly, if but to give you courage."

Tachewski looked at him with his girlishly mild eyes.

"May God reward you," he said. "But I am not losing courage, for even if it were necessary to lay down my head, I would——"

"You had better keep silence," the priest interrupted him. "Would you not have felt sorry for not going against the Turk and for not dying a more noble death?"

"True, Holy Father, and I will take care that the cannibals do not devour me at once."

The priest thought for about a minute, and then said:

"But if I should go over there and tell them what a reward may await them in heaven if they should die at the hands of the pagans, perhaps they would leave you in peace."

"For God's sake, no!" exclaimed Yatzek, quickly. "They would have thought that I urged you on to it. I had better go right away than to listen to such words as these!"

"Well, it is useless to talk! Come," said the priest.

He hailed the workman, gave him an order to get the

sleigh ready at once, and then both he and Tachewski walked out of the house.

But, on noticing the horse on which Pan Yatzek had come, the priest stepped back in astonishment, and exclaimed:

"In the name of the Father and the Son, where did you take this battered jade?"

Indeed, by the fence stood a little horse, somewhat bigger than a fair-sized goat, with drooping head and ragged mane.

"I borrowed it from a peasant," replied Tachewski. "There you are—now go to the Turkish war!"

And he burst into painful, forced laughter.

But the priest said in reply to this:

"It makes no difference on what sort of a horse you will start out, but may God decree that you return on a Turkish horse. And meanwhile take off the saddle and saddle my horse, because you cannot appear before those nobles on this horse."

They arranged everything and started out—the priest, a boy serving in the church with a bell, the driver in the sleigh, and Tachewski on horseback. It was a gloomy and foggy day—it was beginning to thaw. The snow still lay on the frozen ground, but it melted considerably on the top, so that the horses' hoofs sank into it noiselessly, and the sleigh moved along quietly over the even road. Not far from Yedlina they met a few carts with wood. The peasants walked beside their sleds, and they knelt at the sound of the bell, thinking that the priest was on the way to a dying person with his holy sacraments. Then they rode through fields, bare, white fields, wrapped in mist, and over them flocks of crows were flying. As they were nearing the forest the mist grew heavier and heavier, so that, though the croaking of the birds was audible, the birds

could no longer be discerned. The snowbanks on both sides of the road seemed like some phantoms. The world lost its usual outlines and was transformed into some magic land, delusive, with vague, indefinite surroundings and with a perfectly unknown distance.

Tachewski rode on the priest's horse, and thought of the duel, and still more of Panna Seninska; and thus his soul spoke, half to her, half to himself: "My love for you will remain always the same, but my heart has no joy whatever from it. Eh! Truth to tell, I have felt but little joy before. And now, if I could at least embrace your little feet, if I could at least hear one kind word from you, or if I only knew that you would feel sorry for me in case a misfortune should befall me! But all this is like the fog about me. And you yourself are like this mist, and I do not know what is going on with me now, nor do I know what is awaiting me—I know nothing."

And Yatzek felt that a terrible sorrow was settling down on his soul, even as the dampness on his clothes. He drew a deep breath and said:

"But I am glad of this: at least everything will end at once!"

The priest Voinowski was also absorbed in sad thoughts.

"The fellow has suffered," he said to himself. "There was nothing in his youth worth mentioning; there was a great deal of sorrow from this unfortunate love, and now what? Perhaps these bullies, the Bukoyemskis, will kill him. Not long ago they wounded Pan Kobizhski after mass in Kozeniz. And even if they do not kill Tachewski, nothing good will result from this. My God! he's a man like the purest gold, the last offspring of a renowned family of knights, the last drop of noble blood. If he would only now at least be upon his guard! I only hope to God that he will not forget those two strokes: the spurious stroke,

with the bound aside, and the circular stroke across the cheek. Yatzko!"

But Yatzek did not hear him, for he had gone quite a distance away, and the old man did not repeat his call. On the contrary, he was seized with contrition at the thought that a clergyman traveling with the holy sacraments should occupy himself with such matters. He began to repent and pray God for forgiveness.

But he felt more and more depressed. Suddenly he was seized with a foreboding which turned almost into a certainty that this duel, without witnesses, would end for Yatzek in the worst manner.

By this time they reached the crossroads, on the right of which was Virombki and on the left Belchonchki. The driver, who had received his orders in advance, stopped. Tachewski came near the sleigh and dismounted from the horse.

"I'll go to the cross afoot," he said, "because before the sleigh takes you away and comes back I would not know what to do with the horse. It may be that they are there already."

"It isn't noon yet, but it is near it," said the priest, in a slightly changed tone. "What a fog! You'll have to feel your way as you fight."

"Eh! It's light enough!"

The croaking of the invisible crows or the ravens again resounded over their heads.

"Yazko!" said the priest.

"Yes."

"Since the matter must go as far as this, then remember the knights of Tachew."

"They'll not be ashamed of me, Holy Father!"

And, indeed, the old man noticed that the young man's face looked as if turned into stone, and his eyes, though

they lost none of their melancholy expression, no longer had that girlish tenderness which was in them a while before. And the priest said:

“That’s good; but kneel down—I will make over you the sign of the cross, and you should make the sign of the cross before you start fighting.”

Saying this, he made the sign of the cross on the head of Tachewski, who knelt before him on the snow.

Then Tachewski tied the horse behind the sleigh, kissed the priest’s hand and went toward Belchonchki.

“Come back safe and sound!” cried the priest after him.

No one was near the cross, as yet. Tachewski went around it several times, then seated himself on the rock at the foot of the cross and waited.

Perfect silence reigned around him; only large drops, resembling tear-drops, fell from the cross to the soft snow with a light noise. This silence, full of a certain sadness, and this misty emptiness filled Tachewski’s soul with a new wave of melancholy. He felt himself so lonely, as never before.

“True, I am like unto a dry branch of wood in the world,” he thought, “and such will be my fate until my very grave!”

And he waved his hand.

“Well, let it all end at once!”

And he was seized with still more pain at the thought that his opponents were not in any hurry, because they felt cheerful, because they were at this time in Belchonchki, talking of “her,” and because they could look at her as much as they pleased.

But he was mistaken, for they were in a hurry. A minute later he heard the echo of loud talking, and in the pale mist he soon discerned the four huge figures of the Bu-

koyemskis, and the fifth—smaller than the others—that of Ciprianowicz.

They spoke so loud because they were disputing as to who should be the first to fight Tachewski. The Bukoyemskis, however, were always ready to dispute with one another; but this time the dispute was between them and Ciprianowicz, who argued that, as he had been insulted most of all, the right to fight Tachewski first belonged to him. They fell silent only at the sight of the cross and of Tachewski standing near it, and they raised their caps, greeting their opponent.

Tachewski bowed to them in silence and unsheathed his sword; but his heart began to beat uneasily in his breast, for they were five against him, and, besides, the Bukoyemskis looked so terrible: they were strong, broad-shouldered fellows, with mustaches like brooms, with wrinkled brows, while their faces bespoke a certain gloomy, beastly joy, as though they were enjoying the probability of shedding human blood.

“What for will I lose my innocent head?” thought Tachewski.

But after this minute of alarm he was seized with indignation at these drunkards, whom he did not know at all, whom he had never offended in any way, and who, only God knows why, picked a quarrel with him, and now came to take his life away from him.

And he thus turned to them and said from the depth of his soul:

“Wait, you turbulent fellows. You have brought your heads here!”

His cheeks flushed and his teeth were set firmly for rage. The Bukoyemskis were by this time throwing off their top-coats and rolling up their sleeves, and all did it at the same time—and they did it because each expected to be the first

to fight. At last they all stationed themselves in a row with their swords bared, and Tachewski, advancing a step forward, paused and look at them in silence.

Ciprianowicz was the first to break this silence.

"I am at your service first."

"No! I am first, I am first!" cried all the Bukoyemskis at once.

And when Ciprianowicz came forward, the brothers seized him by the elbows. Again a quarrel ensued, in which Ciprianowicz called them "Cossack robbers" and they called him "idler"; and then they abused one another. This quarrel exasperated Tachewski in the extreme; and he said:

"I have never yet seen such knights in all my life."

And he put his sword into his sheath.

"Select some one from among you, or I'll leave!" he said, firmly, raising his voice.

"Make the selection yourself!" exclaimed Ciprianowicz, in the hope that the choice would fall upon him.

Matvey Bukoyemski began to shout that he would not permit a youngster to manage them, and as he shouted, his teeth, bulging out like those of a hare, fairly sparkled from under his mustache. But he, too, fell silent when Tachewski, again unsheathing his sword, pointed at him and said:

"I choose you."

The other brethren, together with Ciprianowicz, immediately retreated, seeing that there was no other way out of this; only their faces darkened, for they knew Matvey's strength, and they were almost sure that nothing would be left for their share.

"Start!" said Ciprianowicz.

Tachewski also felt the power of his opponent at the first attack, so that his sword trembled in his hand, but never-

theless he warded off his blow; he also warded off the second one, and after the third he said to himself:

“He’s not quite so skilful as he is strong!”

Then, squatting down a little in order to strike the better, he attacked his opponent persistently.

The other brethren, the edges of their swords lowered to the ground, followed, open-mouthed, the progress of the duel: they now understood that Tachewski knew his business, and that it was not quite so easy to settle him. A minute later they were convinced that he knew his business only too well, and they were seized with a sense of uneasiness, for, notwithstanding their constant quarrels, they loved each other dearly. Seeing Tachewski’s successful blows, now one, now another of those present uttered an involuntary exclamation. And in the meantime the blows became ever more frequent, and the swords flashed like lightning. Tachewski was evidently growing more and more self-reliant. He was calm, but he jumped about like a lynx, and from his sword flashed ominous sparks.

“Bad!” thought Ciprianowicz.

At this moment a cry was uttered; Matvey’s sword fell to the ground, he brought his hands to his face, which was at once covered with blood, and he sank to the ground.

Seeing this, the younger Bukoyemskis began to bellow like bulls, and in an instant they rushed upon Tachewski furiously—of course, not to attack him three against one, but because each one wanted to be the first to avenge the oldest brother.

And it is quite possible that they would have struck him with their swords all at once, if not for Ciprianowicz, who sprang to Tachewski’s aid and cried with all his might:

“Shame! Get away! You are murderers, not nobles!”

He began to push them aside, until they came to themselves. By that time Matvey raised himself on his hands

and turned to them his face, which was covered with congealed blood. Lukash seized him under the arms and seated him on the snow. Yan also hastened to his assistance.

And Tachewski came over to Marek, who was gnashing his teeth, and began to repeat rapidly, as though fearing lest they might renew the attack upon him:

“Come on! Come on!”

And the swords again sounded ominously. But with Marek, who was stronger than Matvey, but less skilful in fencing, Tachewski had a still easier task. Marek swung his huge sword as a rammer, and Pan Tachewski, at the third stroke, hit him on the collar-bone, cut the bone and disabled him.

Now Yan and Lukash understood that the same terrible fate was awaiting them, and that this young, slender man was indeed a wasp which it was best not to tease. Nevertheless they entered the struggle with all the more vehemence; but it ended just as sadly for them as for their elder brethren: Lukash, his cheek cut to the very gum, sank to the ground and struck against a rock as he fell, and as for Yan, who was the most skillful of his brethren, his sword fell to the ground, together with one of his fingers, which was chopped off.

Tachewski was not even scratched. Now he looked with surprise at the work of his hands, and the sparks which had flashed a minute before in his eyes began to leave them little by little. He adjusted his cap with his left hand, for during the duel it had moved down on his right ear; then he removed it altogether, heaved a deep sigh, heaved another sigh, and, turning toward the cross, he said, half to Ciprianowicz, half to himself:

“God is my witness that I am not to blame.”

Stanislav Ciprianowicz replied to this:

"Now comes my turn; but you are tired and perhaps you want to rest yourself, and meanwhile I will cover my comrades with cloaks, that they should not freeze before aid comes to them."

"Aid is near," replied Tachewski, "for there in the fog is Voinowski's sleigh, and Voinowski is at present in my house. I will go for the sleigh; the Pan Bukoyemskis will feel more comfortable in the sleigh than on the snow."

And he went away, and Ciprianowicz began to cover the Bukoyemskis, who, with the exception of Yan, were sitting on the snow, shoulder to shoulder. Yan was on his knees in front of Matvey, and, holding up his right hand so that no blood should come from his chopped-off finger, he washed with his left hand his older brother's cheek with snow.

"Well, how do you feel?" asked Ciprianowicz.

"He bit us, that dog," replied Lukash, expectorating blood abundantly; "but we'll get square with him yet."

"I can't move my hand at all; he cut my bone," added Marek. "Oh, that dog! Oh!"

"And Matvey is wounded over the eyebrow," said Yan. "It is necessary to stop the wound with bread and cobwebs, but meanwhile the snow will stop the blood from flowing."

"If my eye had not been covered with blood I would have——" said Matvey.

But he could not finish the sentence, because he became weak from the loss of blood.

Instead, Lukash, seized with a sudden fit of rage, exclaimed:

"He's cunning, the dog! He looks like a maiden and he stings like a snake!"

"I'll not forgive him this cunning!" cried Yan.

The snorting of horses interrupted their conversation. Soon a sleigh was discerned in the mist, and a little later

it stopped near the Bukoyemskis. Tachewski jumped out from the sleigh and ordered the driver to get out.

The driver glanced at the Bukoyemskis, then cast a glance at Tachewski and Ciprianowicz, but did not say a word. Only his face assumed an expression of mortification, and he turned toward the horses for a second and made the sign of the cross.

Then the three began to lift the wounded and carry them on their cloaks into the sleigh. The Bukoyemskis at first protested against Tachewski's aid, but he said to them:

"And if you had wounded me, would you leave me here without any aid? It is no more than the service of a noble, which must be rendered, and which must not be refused."

The Bukoyemskis became silent, for Pan Tachewski disarmed them somewhat by his words, and a minute later they stretched themselves in the spacious sleigh on the straw, where they immediately felt warmer.

"Where shall I go?" asked the driver.

"Wait. You'll take another one," replied Ciprianowicz, and, turning to Tachewski, said:

"Well, it is time for us now."

But Tachewski looked at him with almost friendly eyes.

"Eh! Let us rather leave this alone. As it is, only God knows why all this has happened, and you took my part when the Bukoyemskis attacked me in a crowd. Why should we fight?"

"We must and we will fight," replied Ciprianowicz, calmly. "You have disgraced me, and even if that were not the case, it is now a question of my reputation, do you understand? Even if I were to sacrifice my life, even if this were my last hour, we must fight!"

"Well, then, be it so, but it is against my will!" replied Tachewski.

## CHAPTER IV.

THEY bared their swords. Ciprianowicz, though not as strong as the Bukoyemskis, was more skilful than they. It was evident that he had had better teachers and that he had been practicing at fairs and in inns. He attacked with more ease than they and he warded off more ably. Tachewski, in whose heart there was no longer any animosity, and who preferred to confine himself to the lesson he had given to the Bukoyemskis, began to praise his opponent:

"It is altogether a different matter with you," he said; "it is evident that you have not taken lessons from the first comer."

"I'm sorry it wasn't from you," replied Ciprianowicz.

And he was glad for two things: first, for the praise, and second, because he too could reply; for only the most expert fencer will allow himself to talk during a duel, and a friendly conversation in such a case was considered the height of courtesy. All this lifted Ciprianowicz up in his own eyes.

And he attacked Tachewski with renewed energy; but after several strokes, which were warded off by Tachewski, he had to recognize in the depth of his soul the superiority of his opponent. Tachewski repulsed the blows as if unwillingly, but with the greatest dexterity, and altogether he kept himself as if this were not a duel, but a fencing exercise. It was evident that he wanted to find out Ciprianowicz's limitations and how far he was above the Bu-

koyemskis; and finally, having learned this, he was perfectly at ease. Pan Stanislaw understood this, too—all his cheerfulness disappeared and he began to attack violently. Then Tachewski frowned, as though he had grown tired of this amusement, warded off a stroke which is called “false” and took the aggressive, and then jumped back.

“You are wounded!” he said.

Ciprianowicz indeed felt something on his shoulder; but he answered:

“Never mind! Go ahead!”

And he attacked again; but at this very moment the point of Tachewski’s sword split his lower lip and the skin of his face. Pan Tachewski jumped back once more.

“You are bleeding!” he said.

“That’s nothing.”

“Thank God if it is nothing!” replied Tachewski. “But it is enough for me, and I extend to you my hand. You have indeed carried yourself like a knight.”

Ciprianowicz, extremely agitated, but at the same time conquered by Tachewski’s words, hesitated a minute whether he should stop or resume the duel; but then he sheathed his sword and extended his hand to Tachewski.

“Be it so; it is true! I am bleeding.”

He touched his chin with his left hand and began to look with surprise at the blood which stained his palm and his fingers.

“Put some snow on the wound, or it may swell,” said Pan Tachewski, “and let us go to the sleigh.”

Saying this, he took his arm and led him to the Bukoyemskis, who looked at him in silent astonishment. Pan Tachewski now awakened in them genuine respect for him, not only as an excellent fencer, but also as a knight with most refined manners, such as they lacked.

And only after a minute had passed Matvey asked Ciprianowicz:

"Well, how are you, Stanislaw?"

"Fairly well. I could walk, but it is better to ride, because we can come there sooner."

Tachewski sat down near him and shouted to the driver:

"Virombki!"

"Where?" asked Ciprianowicz.

"To me. You will feel uncomfortable in my house, but what can you do? In Belchonchki you would frighten the women, while in my house Voinowski, the priest, is waiting, and he will dress your wounds, for he is an expert in dressing wounds. We can send for horses for you, and then you may do whatever you please. I will ask the priest to go to Belchonchki and cautiously inform them of what has happened."

Pan Tachewski suddenly became thoughtful, and after a pause said:

"Oh! It was bad before, and what will it be now! May God forgive you for insisting upon this duel!"

"True, we insisted," replied Ciprianowicz. "I will affirm it, and so will the Bukoyemskis."

"We'll affirm it, although my shoulder pains me dreadfully," said Marek, and he began to moan. "Oh, you have embellished us; may the devil take you!"

It was not a long distance to Virombki. They soon rode into the yard, where they found the priest Voinowski standing in the deep snow. The old man, restless and alarmed, could not stay in the house, and he came outside.

On noticing him, Tachewski jumped out of the sleigh. The priest hastened toward him, and, seeing that he was safe and sound, exclaimed:

"Well, how was it there?"

"Here, you see, I've brought them along," replied Tachewski.

The old man's face brightened up for a while, but it immediately became serious, for he caught sight of the blood-stained Bukoyemskis and Ciprianowicz in the sleigh.

He even clasped his hands.

"All five!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, all five."

"What an outrage!" Then he turned to the wounded:

"How do you feel, gentlemen?"

The wounded raised their caps, all of them, except Marek, who could not move his hand because of his broken collar-bone. He only moaned and said:

"He has peppered us nicely!"

"Never mind!" said the others.

"Let us trust in God," replied the old man. "And now let's come into the house as fast as we can! I will at once examine you."

And together with Tachewski he went after the sleigh as fast as he could. But he paused for a minute, nevertheless; delight flashed in his eyes. He clasped his arms around Tachewski's neck and said:

"Yazus! Let me embrace you. You have brought a whole load of them, as if they were so many sheaves!"

Tachewski kissed his hand and said:

"They wanted it themselves, Holy Father."

The priest placed his hand on Tachewski's head once more, as though to bless him, but immediately reconsidered that such joy was not becoming to his priestly robes; therefore he looked at Tachewski sternly and said:

"But you needn't think that I am approving your action. It is your luck that they wanted it themselves, but the sin will remain a sin nevertheless."

At the entrance Tachewski rushed over to the sleigh in

order to help the driver—and the only servant at his command—remove the wounded.

But all save Marek, who had to be supported, got out without any assistance, and within a minute they found themselves in the house. Straw was in readiness there, and also Tachewski's bed, which was covered with white, somewhat outworn horsehide, and with felt at the head of the bed. On the table, by the window, lay bread which had been kneaded together with cobweb—an excellent remedy for stopping the flow of blood—and also excellent balsams of the priest Voinowski for healing.

The old man at once began to examine the wounds with all the skill of a veteran who had seen thousands of them in his life, and who could heal them no worse than any physician. The matter went smoothly, for, with the exception of Marek, all had but slight wounds. Marek's collar-bone required considerably more work. At last, when that was also dressed, the priest heaved a sigh and rubbed his blood-stained hands.

““Well,” said he, “thank the Lord Jesus, the affair ended without any too serious results. You will probably feel relieved shortly, gentlemen.”

“I am thirsty!” replied Matvey Bukoyemski.

“That wouldn't harm. Yatzek, order to have some water brought here!”

But Matvey lifted himself on the straw.

“Water?” he asked, with astonishment in his voice.

And Marek, outstretched upon Tachewski's bed, and moaning slightly, suddenly ejaculated:

“I suppose, Holy Father, you wish to wash your hands.”

Tachewski looked at the priest in despair; but the latter began to laugh, and said:

“You're real soldiers! You may have some wine, but not much.”

Tachewski tugged him by the sleeve behind the screen.

"Holy Father," he whispered, "what am I to do now? My cellar is empty, my pantry is empty; I am myself fastening my belt ever tighter and tighter about me. What will I give them?"

"That's all right!" said the old man in a whisper. "Come out here. I have made arrangements to have everything brought here, and if we should run short I will ask the brewers of Yedlina for more. Of course, I will ask them as though I needed it for myself—for myself. Order a glassful to each of them, so as to console them after the unfortunate incident."

Yatzek returned soon, and presently the Bukoyemskis began to console one another. At the same time their goodwill toward Tachewski grew from minute to minute.

"We fought this duel because that may happen with anybody," said Matvey, "but I thought even then that you were a worthy knight."

"It isn't true, for I was first to think so," exclaimed Lukash.

"You thought so? Why, can you think of anything?"

"Well, now I am thinking that you are a fool, evidently I can think. But my lip hurts me."

And they began to quarrel; but at this moment a man on horseback appeared at the window.

"Somebody has come here!" said the priest.

Tachewski went out to see who it was, and a minute later he returned, deeply agitated.

"Pan Pongowski sent his servant," he said, "and he ordered him to say that he is waiting for you with dinner."

"Let him eat his dinner himself," said Yan.

"What shall I tell him?" asked Tachewski, looking at the priest.

"The best is to tell the truth. And it will be better still if I will tell it to him."

And, going out to the servant, he said:

"Tell Pan Pongowski that neither Pan Ciprianowicz nor the Pan Bukoyemskis will come, because they were all wounded in a duel, to which they challenged Pan Tachewski; but do not forget to add that they are not seriously wounded. God speed you!"

The servant started off briskly, and the priest, returning into the house, began to calm Tachewski, who was still agitated. He had not feared to meet the five knights, but he did fear Pan Pongowski, and he was still more afraid of what Panna Seninska would say and think about this.

The priest said:

"They would have found this out anyhow, so it is best that they learn as soon as possible that it was not your fault."

"Will you affirm this?" asked Tachewski, once more addressing the wounded.

"We want to drink, but we will certainly affirm this," replied Matvey.

Nevertheless Tachewski's agitation grew more intense every minute, and when, at last, Pan Pongowski and the Starost Grotus stopped at the entrance his heart sank within him. He hastened, however, to meet them, and bowed before Pongowski; but Pongowski paid not the slightest attention to him, as if he did not notice him at all, and entered the room with a morose, stern expression on his face.

In the room Pan Pongowski made a courteous bow to the priest from afar. The old man had once attacked him publicly for being too stern toward his people, and the self-reliant nobleman never forgave him for that. And even

now, after the cold bow, he turned to the wounded, looked at them for about a minute, and said:

“Gentlemen, after what has happened, I swear that I would not have crossed the threshold of this house if it were not that I wanted to see you, so deeply have I been grieved by the outrage heaped upon you. So this is where my hospitality has led you; this is the reward which met my rescuers in my own house! But I will tell but one thing: that he who offended you offended me; he who has shed your blood would have done much better if he had shed my own blood, for he has disgraced me, who have invited you under my roof——”

At this point Matvey interrupted him:

“It was not he that challenged us, but we challenged him.”

“Yes,” affirmed Stanislaw Ciprianowicz. “This knight is not to blame for anything that has happened; it is our fault, and we humbly beg your forgiveness.”

“The judge should examine the witnesses before pronouncing the verdict,” said the priest, seriously.

Lukash also wanted to say something, but at the first attempt he felt a terrible pain in his cheek and on his gum, which was cut through to his very teeth; and therefore he covered with his hand the salve, which was already getting dry, and exclaimed:

“The deuce take the verdict and my cheek together with it!”

Pan Pongowski was confused to a certain extent by these voices, but he did not yield. On the contrary, he surveyed everybody with his stern eyes, as he wanted thus to express his disapproval to Yatzek’s defenders, and he said:

“It is not for me to forgive my rescuers. You have no fault whatever in the matter. On the contrary, I understand very well, because I have seen how contemptuously

you were treated. In truth, the same envy which could not on a dead horse overtake the live wolves finally aroused in him a desire for vengeance. I was not the only one to notice that this 'knight,' whom you are defending so nobly, did everything he could, from the first moment that he met you, to incite you to this act. It is rather my fault, for I should have stopped him; I should have told him to look for more suitable company for himself in an inn or on the market-place."

Tachewski turned pale as a sheet when he heard this, and priest Voinowski's blood rushed to his head.

"They challenged him! What was he to do? Shame yourself, Pan Pongowski!" exclaimed the priest.

But Pan Pongowski looked down at him and replied:

"This is a worldly matter, in which laymen are quite as well versed as clergymen, and perhaps even more so; but nevertheless I will tell you that no one ever accused me of being unjust. What was he to do? As a young man toward his elder, as a guest toward his host, as a man who had so many times enjoyed my bread when he was short of his own, he was first of all obliged to inform me of this matter, and I as the host would have set everything right. I would not have permitted that my rescuers, such worthy knights, should bleed here, in this wretched room, on straw, as in a barn."

"You would have considered me a coward!" cried Tachewski, trembling feverishly.

Pan Pongowski did not reply to his words, for he showed as soon as he entered that he took no notice of him; he turned to Ciprianowicz and said:

"Pan Ciprianowicz, we are going at once to your father, to express to him our sympathy. I do not doubt that he will not refuse to come to Belchonchki, where I invite you and your comrades. I remind you again, you are here acci-

dentally, and in reality you are my guests, to whom I wish to express my heartiest gratitude. Your father, Pan Ciprianowicz, cannot come to the house of the man who bruised you, and under my roof you will have great conveniences, and you will not die of hunger, something which may happen with you if you stay here."

Ciprianowicz felt very much confused and did not reply for a minute. Would it be right to act that way with Tachewski? And, besides, his lip and chin, which began to swell under the plaster, disfigured his face badly.

"I have not experienced here either hunger or thirst," he said, "which is already *probatu tu fuit*; but we are really your guests, and my father, not knowing all the circumstances in the case, may not feel like coming here. But how can I appear before your relatives with such a disfigured face, which can arouse nothing but disgust?"

He frowned, because his lip began to pain him from the long speech; and, indeed, he did not look very attractive.

But Pan Pongowski replied:

"Don't worry on this account. My relatives will be filled with disgust, but not against your wounds, which will heal up quickly, and you will look as you did before. Three sleds with servants will come over here immediately for you, and comfortable beds are awaiting you in my house. Meanwhile, good-bye, for I am hastening to Yedlina with the Starost."

And he bowed to all, especially to the priest; but he did not even shake his head to Tachewski. When he approached the door the priest went over to him and said:

"You have too little mercy and justice."

Pan Pongowski replied to this:

"I repent my sins at confession."

He walked out, and the Starost Grotus followed him.

Tachewski stood all this time as upon red-hot iron. His

face changed every minute, and at times he did not know whether he should fall to Pan Pongowski's feet begging him for forgiveness, or whether he should seize him by the throat for all the humiliation which he had experienced. But he managed to remember that he was in his own house, and that the man before him was the guardian of Panna Seninska. Thus, when Pan Pongowski walked out, Tachewski went after him, without giving himself any account of what he was doing; he went out partly because it was customary for the host to accompany his guests, and partly because he was drawn by a certain blind hope that perhaps at the very last moment the stern Pan Pongowski would nod his head to him. But this hope also deceived him; only Pan Grotus, evidently a kind and considerate man, shook his hand in the doorway and whispered:

"Don't despair, knight; the first anger will pass, and then all will be right.

But Tachewski did not think so; and he would have been perfectly right if he knew that Pan Pongowski, though really enraged and indignant, showed greater irritation than he really felt. Ciprianowicz and the Bukoyemskis were indeed his rescuers, but Tachewski only wounded them, and a duel was in itself an ordinary thing, which did not call forth such inexorable indignation. But ever since Pan Grotus told Pongowski that older men than he got married, and sometimes leave even posterity, he looked with altogether different eyes upon Panna Seninska. That of which he had not thought before suddenly seemed to him not only possible, but even attractive. At the thought of the girl, who was as wonderful as a rose, his soul became warm and his pride grew more intense. How the renewed stem of the Pongowskis would blossom and grow in a union with such a patrician as Seninska, who was not only a relative of all famous families in the republic, but also the last offspring

of a family, out of the wealth of which rose the Zhulkewskis, the Danilowiczs and the Sobieskis and many others. Pan Pongowski's head began to reel, and he began to feel that it was essential not only to him but to the whole republic that the family of the Pongowskis should be prolonged. But soon came the apprehension that this might not be realized—that Panna Seninska might fall in love with another and might give him her hand. He knew no one worthier than himself in the entire neighborhood; but there were three younger men. Who? Ciprianowicz? Yes! He was young, handsome and very rich, but his nobility counted but three generations back. That such a *homo novus* should marry Panna Seninska! He could not entertain this idea under any circumstances. As for the Bukoyemskis, although they belonged to a good family and called themselves relatives of Saint Peter, it was ridiculous to think of them. Only Tachewski remained—poor, it is true, like a church-mouse, but he was of the ancient family of the mighty knights of Tachew, of the coat-of-arms of Powal, one of whom, a real hero, and participant in the massacre of the Germans under Grünwald, was renowned not only in the republic, but also in foreign courts. Tachewski alone could compare with the Seninskas, and then he was young, brave, handsome, sad (and this very often touches women's hearts), a frequent guest at Belchonchki, a great friend of the Panna, almost like a brother. And then Pan Pongowski began to recall various things: the misunderstandings and the quarrels of the young people; their reconciliation and friendship; various looks and words, and their sorrows and mutual joys and their smiles. And everything to which he had paid no attention before now aroused his suspicions. Yes! Danger there was, and it threatened only from that side. The old noble thought that Panna Seninska was at least partly the cause of the

duel, and he was frightened in the depth of his soul. In order to forestall the danger, he first of all took precautions to present to the young lady all the disgrace of Tachewski's act and awaken in her the desired indignation, and then, displaying his anger as much greater than it really was, to destroy all the bridges between Belchonchki and Virombki, and by heartlessly humiliating Tachewski close before him the doors of his house.

And he attained his aim. Tachewski, returning into the house, clutched his hair, lowered his head and maintained silence, as though grown dumb with grief.

Priest Voinowski came over to him and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"Yatzek, what you must suffer, suffer!" he said, "but your foot must not cross the threshold of that house."

"It shall be so," replied Tachewski, in a dull voice.

"But you must not yield to grief. Do not forget who you are."

Tachewski set his teeth firmly together.

"I remember that, but that makes it all the bitterer."

Here Ciprianowicz interposed:

"None of us can justify Pan Pongowski, because it is one thing to reprimand, and quite another to trample upon one's honor."

The Bukoyemskis also began to stir; and Matvey, for whom it was comparatively easier to speak, said:

"I'll not say anything in his house, but when I get well and meet him some time on the road or at some neighbor's I'll tell him to kiss a dog's snout."

"Oi, oi!" added Marek. "To insult such a worthy knight! There will come a time when I will remind him about it."

By this time came three sleds, covered with rugs, and three servants, aside from the drivers. Tachewski dared not

detain the wounded, first, because old Ciprianowicz might come there, and second, because they were really Pongowski's guests; and, besides, they would not stay there, anyway, after they had learned of his poverty, in order not to be a burden unto him. They began to bid him farewell and to thank him for his hospitality as sincerely as though nothing had occurred between them.

But when Ciprianowicz seated himself in the last sled Tachewski suddenly jumped over to him and said:

"I am going with you! I can't bear this any longer! I can't bear it! Until Pan Pongowski returns, I must—for the last time——"

Priest Voinowski knew Tachewski; he understood that no entreaties would be of any avail; nevertheless he drew him behind the screen and began to reason with him:

"Yazko! Yazko! Again *mulier*! Look out, or you will be insulted still worse. Remember what Ecclesiastes says: '*Virum de mille unum reperi, mulierem omnibus non inveni!*' Remember and have mercy upon yourself!"

But his words were useless. A minute later Tachewski sat side by side with Ciprianowicz, and they started off. By that time the east wind dispersed the mist, drove it up to the forest, and the sun began to shine brightly in the blue sky.

## CHAPTER V.

PAN PONGOWSKI did not at all exaggerate when he spoke of the disgust which the ladies living in Belchonchki felt against the victor. Tachewski convinced himself of this at the first glance. Pani Vinicka came out to meet him with an expression of dissatisfaction on her face, and she withdrew her hand, which he was about to kiss; and Panna Seninska was not moved by his confusion and embarrassment: she did not even pay attention to his bow, and busied herself completely with Ciprianowicz. Sparing neither tender looks nor anxious inquiries, she went so far in her tenderness toward Ciprianowicz that when he rose from his chair in the dining-room, in order to go into the room set aside for the wounded, she took his arm and, though he excused himself in every manner, she led him to the door.

"There is no room for you here—all is lost!" despair and jealousy cried in Tachewski's heart at the sight of this. It pained him all the more because he could not understand how the same girl, whose bearing toward him was so inconstant, and who usually replied indifferently, if not harshly, to his impassioned words—he could not understand how she could be so gentle and so angelically kind to the man she liked. And that Panna Seninska loved Ciprianowicz, Tachewski no longer doubted for a moment. He would be willing to suffer not only such a wound as Ciprianowicz sustained; he would gladly shed all his blood in order that she should at least once in life speak to him in

such a voice and look at him with such eyes. Now, together with this acute pain, he was seized with immeasurable grief, which came to his eyes in a stream of tears, which, if they will not gush forth from the eyes and roll down the cheeks, will drown the heart and will fill up the whole being. Now, Tachewski felt that all his breast was overflowing with tears, and, in addition to this, Panna Seninska had never before seemed to him so wonderfully beautiful as now, with her pale face and ash-colored hair, which was slightly ruffled from excitement.

"She looks like an angel," grief spoke within him, "but not for you! She's beautiful, but another will take her."

And he wanted to fall before her feet and at her knees pour out all his misery and his love; and at the same time he felt that, after what had happened, he could not do it—that if he should not master himself and should not suppress his inner discord, he would not tell her that which he wanted to tell her, and would altogether lower himself in her eyes.

By this time Pani Vinicka, as an elderly lady, and one who knew how to dress wounds, followed Ciprianowicz into the adjoining room, and Panna Seninska was returning. Tachewski understood that he must avail himself of the opportunity, and he walked over to her.

"I wanted to say one word to you," he said, in a quivering voice, endeavoring to be calm.

She looked at him in cold amazement.

"What is it you wish?"

Tachewski's face lit up with a sick, almost martyr-like smile.

"What I wish will never be, even though I were to sacrifice the salvation of my soul for it," he said, nodding his head; "but I ask of you one thing: do not blame me, do

not be angry at me, have at least a little mercy for me, because I am not of stone, nor of iron——”

“I can’t say anything in reply to you,” said Panna Seninska; “and, besides, now is not the time for it.”

“Oh, it is always the time to say a word of encouragement to the man who finds it hard in the world!”

“Shall I do it, perhaps, because you have wounded my rescuers?”

“God is always on the side of the innocent. The servant who came to these knights in Virombki must have told you what priest Voinowski instructed him—that I was not first to challenge them. Is it possible that you don’t know about it?”

She did know. The servant, as a simple fellow, did not repeat the words of the priest, but cried out that “the young Pan of Virombki slashed them all”; but then Pan Pongowski, returning from Virombki, came into the house and told them everything as it really happened. He feared lest the news that Tachewski was challenged to fight the duel should reach the young lady from some other source, and might thus weaken her anger, and therefore he preferred to present the matter himself, not failing to add that Tachewski had, by cruel insults, forced them to challenge him. He had also counted that Panna Seninska, understanding things like a woman, would always be on the side of those that suffered most.

Nevertheless it seemed to Tachewski that the beloved eyes looked at him less sternly, and therefore he repeated the question:

“Did you know about it?”

“I did,” she replied; “but I remembered that which you should have remembered, if you had the slightest sympathy with me: those knights have saved my life. I have also

learned from my guardian that they were forced to challenge you."

"I have no sympathy with you? May God, who looks into human hearts, judge of this."

The girl's eyes began to blink. Suddenly she tossed her head back, so that her braid fell to the other shoulder, and she said:

"Yes."

And he went on, in a slightly choked and very sad voice:

"You have said the truth—the truth! I should have allowed them to cut me to pieces, only not to annoy you. Then the blood which is so dear to you would not have been shed. But now it can't be helped in any way. Your guardian told you that I compelled them to challenge me. I leave that to the judgment of God! But did he, at least, tell you how mercilessly he mocked me under my own roof? I have come here because I know that he is away. I have come in order to take the last look at you. I know it is all the same to you, but I thought that at least——"

Here Tachewski broke off, because the tears welled up to his throat. Panna Seninska's lips began to tremble, assuming the shape of a horseshoe; and only pride, and together with it maidenly timidity, struggled within her with agitation. But she suppressed this agitation, perhaps that she might draw out from Tachewski still more plaintive declarations, and perhaps because she did not believe that he would really go away, never to return to her. There had been several misunderstandings between them, and Pan Pongowski had more than once caused him painful disagreeablenesses; and yet, after a brief irritation, there would be a silent invitation to come to Belchonchki, and all would be as before.

"It'll be the same thing now!" thought Panna Seninska. And as it was sweet to her to listen to him, and to look at

the great love which he expressed, though he dared not utter it in definite terms, together with absolute submissiveness, the Panna wished that he should continue to speak in his wonderful voice, that he should keep on placing at her feet his young, loving and suffering heart.

But Tachewski, inexperienced in love affairs and blind like all lovers, did not notice and did not understand what was going on within her. Her silence he mistook for hardened indifference, and bitterness began to fill his heart little by little. The calmness with which he spoke at first began to leave him; his eyes began to glisten differently; drops of cold perspiration appeared on his temples. Something was fluttering and breaking in his soul. He was seized with such profound despair that he ceased to reason, and he was ready with his own hands to open his own heart-wounds.

He spoke with apparent calmness, but his voice sounded differently—it was firmer and broader.

“Yes!” he said. “Well, then—not a word?”

Panna Seninska shrugged her shoulders.

“Yes; the priest was right when he said that I would meet still greater insult here.”

“How have I insulted you?” she asked, unpleasantly surprised at the sudden change which took place in him.

But Tachewski went on:

“If I had not seen how tenderly you treated Ciprianowicz I would have thought that there is no heart in your breast. But you have a heart—only for him, not for me. He looked at you—and that was enough!”

Suddenly he clutched his hair with both his hands.

“It were better if they had cut me to death!”

Panna Seninska felt as if scorched with fire. Her cheeks reddened, her eyes began to flash with anger at Tachewski as well as at herself, because a minute before she had been

on the point of bursting into tears. Profound and unexpected insult oppressed her heart.

"You have lost your reason!" she exclaimed, lifting her head and throwing her hair back.

And Panna Seninska wanted to go away; but this drove Tachewski almost to madness. He seized her by the hands and held her.

"You will go away and I will go away!" he uttered through his firmly set teeth. "But before parting I will tell you one thing: although for many years I loved you more than my health, more than my life, more than my soul, I'll never come here again. Even if I should gnaw my hands for pain, I will not come back—and may the Lord help me in this!"

And leaving on the floor his wornout cap, he rushed to the door, passed by the windows, turning toward the garden, through which it was easier to reach Virombki, and disappeared.

Panna Seninska stood as though thunderstruck. Her thoughts ran wild, and at this moment she could not understand what had happened. But when she collected her thoughts her anger disappeared, the feeling of having been offended disappeared, and in her ears rang only Tachewski's words: "I loved you more than my health, more than my life, more than my soul—and I will not come back again!" Only now she began to feel that he would never return, and just because he loved her so dearly. Why did she not say at least one kind word to him, which he, before he had been seized with madness, had begged as alms, as a piece of bread for the journey? He rushed away infuriated; perhaps he may fall somewhere on the road, or perhaps he may do something wrong in despair. One kind word could have softened and adjusted all this. If he could but hear her voice! Beyond the garden he would have to cross the

brook on the way to the meadow, and there he may hear her. And she ran out into the garden. The snow was deep on the middle path, but Tachewski's steps were clearly visible upon it, and she followed them, knee-deep in snow. She lost her rosary on the way, her handkerchief and the cotton bag, and, breathing with difficulty, reached the gate of the garden at last.

"Pan Yatzek!"

But the meadow beyond the gate was empty. The wind, which had driven the morning mist away, was now blowing noisily through the branches of the apple trees and pear trees. Then, paying no heed to her light dress, she sat down on the bench near the gate and began to cry.

Large tear-drops, like gems, rolled down her rosy cheeks, and she, not knowing wherewith to wipe them away, began to wipe them with her braid.

"He'll not return!"

And the wind meanwhile blew with still greater force, shaking the moist snow off from the black branches of the trees.

When Tachewski, like a whirlwind, without his cap and with disheveled hair, came rushing to Virombki, priest Voinowski surmised what had happened, and he said:

"I have predicted it to you! May the Lord help you, Yatzko, but I will not ask you a word until you have come to yourself."

"All's over, all's over!" replied Tachewski.

And he began to pace the room like a wild beast in a cage.

The priest did not say another word, and did not interfere with him in any way; and only after a long time he embraced him, kissed him on the crown of the head, and then, taking him by the hand, led him behind the screen.

There he knelt before the crucifix which hung over Ta-

chewski's bed, and when the young man also knelt beside him he began:

"O Lord, Thou knowest what sorrow is, for Thou sorrowed on the cross for human sins.

"And here I bring before Thee my bleeding heart, and I pray at Thy pierced feet that Thou have mercy on me.

"And I do not call upon Thee: take away my sorrow; but I pray: give me strength to bear it.

"For I am a soldier in Thy service, O Lord, and I wish to serve Thee and my mother, the Republic.

"But how am I to do it, if my heart has grown faint and my right hand weak?

"Make it so that I shall forget about myself, and that I shall remember only Thy glory and to save my mother—and these are greater matters than the sorrow of such an insignificant worm as I am.

"And strengthen me, O Lord, in my saddle, that I, fighting against the heathen, shall come unto an honorable death and into heaven.

"For the sake of Thy crown of thorns, hear me!

"For the sake of Thy wounds, hear me!

"For the sake of Thy pierced hands and feet, hear me!"

They knelt for a long time, but already in the middle of the prayer it was evident that the pain had broken in Tachewski's heart, for he suddenly covered his face with his hands and began to sob. And when they rose and went into the other room priest Voinowski heaved a deep sigh and said:

"Yatzko, dearest, I have experienced a great deal during my military life; I have experienced misery compared with which your present sorrow is as nothing; but I don't want to speak of it. I will tell you but one thing: in the hour of the most unbearable pain I delivered this same prayer, and I attribute my deliverance to it. Since then I have repeated

it whenever misfortune came, and it always brought me great relief. Therefore I have read it just now. Well, has it not brought to you relief? Tell me."

"Though it still pains me, it seems to me it does not burn so much now," replied Tachewski.

"Well, there, you see! Now, drink some wine, and I will tell you, or, rather, I will show you something which must give you courage. Look!"

And, bending down his head, he showed him a terrible scar, white, among the white hair, across the entire skull, and said:

"I nearly died from this. The wound pained me dreadfully, but the scar does not pain me. That is the way it is always, Yatzko. Your wound will also stop paining when it will become a scar in time. And now tell me, what has happened?"

Yatzek began to tell him, but the story did not run smoothly. By nature he could not invent, or exaggerate, or color, and now he was surprised how all that had touched him so painfully did not appear so terrible in his story. Nevertheless the priest, a man evidently experienced and one who knew the world, listened to the end, and said:

"I understand that it is hard to translate into words a look or a motion which may have been really contemptuous and offensive. It has happened that on account of a single glance or a single motion of the hand people fought duels and shed one another's blood. The principal thing is that you told that girl that you will never return. Youth is usually light-minded, and when it is guided by pangs of love is changeable as the moon in the skies. And love is just the same as *luna mendax*, which seems small at its appearance, but then grows as it approaches the full-moon. Well, have you a firm determination to keep your promise?"

"I said, 'May God help me!' and, if you wish, I will repeat my vow before the crucifix."

"But what do you intend to do with yourself?"

"I'll go wherever my eyes will lead me."

"I had expected it, and had long advised you to do this. I knew what detained you, but now that you've broken the chain—yes! go where your eyes will lead you. Here you have nothing to wait for; you have not met anything good here, nor will you meet it here. It was ruining you. Fortunately I was near you and have taught you a little Latin and how to handle the sword, or you had been a real peasant. Don't thank me, Yazus; it came from my hearty inclination to do it. I will feel lonesome without you, but here is not a question about me. You are going where your eyes will lead you—that is, as I understand it, you are going to enter the army. This is the straightest and worthiest road, all the more so because the war is to be against the pagans. They say that with the pen one can attain a high position sooner than with the sword, but this is hardly belonging to such blood as yours."

"I have not thought of any other service," replied Tachewski; "but I will not join the infantry, and I cannot get into the best regiments because I am a pauper."

"A noble who knows Latin and who can handle a sword will always attain his aim," the priest interrupted him; "but, of course, it goes without saying that you must be well equipped. We must consider this. And meanwhile I will tell you something of which I never spoke to you: I have for you ten gold pieces, which your deceased mother left with me, and a letter in which she asked me to give them to you only in case of extreme emergency. Well, the decisive moment has come. Your mother was worthy and devout, though very unfortunate, for when the poor woman

was dying there was the direst want in the house, and that which she gave me was torn away from herself——”

“May the Lord rest her soul,” replied Yatzek. “Let the gold pieces go for the repose of her soul, and I will sell Virombki for whatever I am offered.”

On hearing this the priest was so touched that tears glistened in his eyes, and he again pressed Tachewski’s hand.

“You have noble blood in you,” he said, “but you cannot refuse your mother’s gift, even for this purpose. There will be no lack of praying for your mother—you may rest easy on that account; she hardly needs them; the prayers will be good for other souls pining in purgatory. As for Virombki, it is better to mortgage it, because a noble who possesses even a small piece of land is regarded differently—he’s a land-owner, after all.”

“But I can’t wait. I should like to go away to-day.”

“You will not go to-day, although the sooner the better. First of all I must prepare letters to my colleagues and acquaintances. I shall have to talk with the brewers in Yedlina; their bags are full, and they have horses which even an armored knight need not feel ashamed to ride. I have at home an old armor and a few swords, not so much embellished as tried on Swedish and Turkish bodies.”

The priest looked out of the window and added:

“The sled is ready; it’s time for him to go who must go!”

Tachewski’s face again became distorted with pain. He kissed the priest’s hand and said:

“Another request, holy father and my benefactor: allow me to go together with you and to stay with you until I go away. From here I can see those roofs, and I—am very near to them——”

“I wanted to suggest that to you. You have nothing to do here, and I shall be glad with all my soul to have you with me. Eh, Yazus! Cheer up! The world does not

end in Belchonchki; it is all wide open before you. When you once mount your horse God knows where you will go. The war is awaiting you, fame is awaiting you, and what is sore to-day will dry up. I can already see how wings are growing behind your shoulders. Fly, then, God's bird, because you have been created for that and predestined."

And joy, like a sunbeam, lit up the worthy countenance of the priest. In soldier fashion he struck himself on the knees and exclaimed:

"And now take your cap and march!"

But small things sometimes stand in the way of big things, and the comical mingles with the pathetic. Yatzek looked around, then glanced mournfully at the priest and repeated:

"My cap?"

"Of course! You'll not go bareheaded, will you?"

"There you are!"

"What is it?"

"And what if it remained in Belchonchki?"

"What's to be done?"

"What's to be done? I'll have to take it from the workman; I can't go with a peasant's cap——"

"You can't go with a peasant's cap," repeated the priest; "then send to Belchonchki for yours."

"Under no circumstances!" cried Yatzek.

But the old man was becoming excited.

"What's this! War, glory, a great field—that's all very good, but you need a cap, too!"

"At the bottom of my trunk there is an old hat which my father had taken from a Swedish officer under Tremeshni."

"Then put it on and come!"

Yatzek disappeared behind the screen, and a minute later he came out in a horseman's yellow hat, which was much too

wide for his head. Enlivened by this sight, the priest touched his left side, as though he was looking for his sword, and he said:

“It is good yet that it is a Swedish hat and not a Turkish turban. But even this is a perfect masquerade.”

Yatzek smiled, and said:

“There are some stones in the buckle; perhaps they’re worth something.”

Then they seated themselves in the sled and started off. Soon, beyond the leafless alder-trees, as on a palm, Belchonchki became visible; and the priest began to watch Yatzek closely; but Tachewski pulled down the Swedish hat over his eyes, and he did not even look in that direction, although his cap remained there.

## CHAPTER VI.

“HE’LL not return ! all is lost !” said Panna Seninska to herself.

And how strange ! There were five men in the house, of whom one was young and handsome, and, aside from the Starost Grotus, old Ciprianowicz was expected to come ; in a word, there were seldom so many guests in Belchonchki, and yet it seemed to Panna Seninska that she was suddenly surrounded by emptiness ; and she felt that something was missing, that the house was empty, that she was all alone, as in a desert, and it would remain thus forever.

Her heart contracted with acute pain, and she felt as one who loses a near relation. She was sure that Tachewski would not come back, all the more so because Pan Pongowski had mortally offended him ; and yet she could not picture to herself how it would be without him, without his face, his words, his laughter, his looks. What would be to-morrow, the day after to-morrow, a week later, a month later ; wherefore was she to rise in the morning, wherefore was she to plait her hair, for whom was she to dress herself up, and what was she to live for at all ?

And she felt as though her heart had been a candle and some one had suddenly blown it out.

There was nothing more—nothing but gloom and emptiness.

But when she entered the house and noticed Tachewski’s cap on the floor all her indefinite feelings retreated before

one simple and great sorrow for him. Again her heart began to speak within her, again it began to call him. Now a ray of hope brightened her soul. Taking up the cap, she involuntarily pressed it to her heart; then she hid it in her sleeve and began to meditate thus:

"He will not come here every day as before, but before my guardian and Pan Grotus will return from Yedlina he must come back for his cap; then I will see him and tell him that he was cruel and unjust, and that he should not have acted thus."

But she was not sincere with her own self, because she wished to tell him more, to find some warm, kind word which would again tie together the torn thread. If this would happen, if they could meet in the church on friendly terms, or at their neighbors', then there would be some way in which to set the matter right. What that way would have to be, and what was to set right, Panna Seninska did not consider at the present moment, for she was wholly occupied with the thought of how to see Tachewski as soon as possible.

At this time Pani Vinicka came out of the room where the wounded lay, and, noticing the girl's agitated face and her reddened eyes, she began to calm her:

"Don't be afraid; nothing wrong will come of this. Only one of the Bukoyemskis suffered, and he will also get off easily. The wounds of the others are trifling. Besides, the priest Voinowski had dressed them so well that there was no need to change anything. They are all in a cheerful frame of mind."

"Thank God!"

"Has Tachewski gone away? What did he want here?"

"He brought the wounded."

"Well, who could have expected such a thing of him?"

"They challenged him themselves."

"They don't deny that; but the thing is that he cut them all up—five of them, one after another! And I thought he'd be afraid of a hen."

"Then you did not know him, auntie," replied Panna Seninska, with some pride.

But even in Pani Vinicka's voice there was a sound of respect, for, having been born and bred in those parts of the country which were subject to frequent invasions of Tartars, she had learned from her early childhood to respect valor, and the skill of handling a sword she considered as the greatest virtue in a man. Thus, now that the first fear for the guests had passed, she began to look at this duel with altogether different eyes.

"Still," she said, "I must say that they are also worthy knights, because they are not only not angry at him, but they even praise him; especially does Ciprianowicz praise him. 'That's a born soldier,' he says. And they even take offense at Pan Pongowski, who overstepped all limits at Virombki, according to their words."

"You, auntie, did not receive him much better."

"Because he deserved it. And did you receive him well?"

"I?"

"Yes, you! I saw how you were pouting at him."

"My dear auntie——"

The girl suddenly became silent, for she felt that she would burst into tears at any moment. During the conversation Tachewski had grown still more in her eyes. Alone against such experienced men, and yet he wounded them all, he conquered them all! True, he used to say that he went against a bear with a hunting-pole; but, then, the peasants, who live near the forest, arm themselves with nothing but cudgels, and this did not seem remarkable in any way. But to conquer five knights, only a knight more

skillful and braver than they could do that. It seemed simply wonderful to Panna Seninska that a man who possessed such melancholy and gentle eyes could be so terrible in battle. It showed, then, that he had yielded to her alone; that he endured all only on her account; that he was timid and deferent before her alone. Why? Because he loved her better than his health, better than happiness, better than the salvation of his soul. An hour ago he had confessed it to her himself.

And again sorrow rushed to her heart like an enormous wave. But at the same time she felt that something had changed in their relations with each other, and that if she saw him again, and then met him frequently, she would not allow herself to play with him as she had done before, now throwing him into despair, now giving him hope, now repulsing him, now attracting him. She felt that she would involuntarily regard him with greater respect and that she would become more submissive and careful.

At times another voice would start to speak within her, reminding her that Tachewski was vehement toward her, that he told her a number of bitter and offensive words—more than she had said to him. But that voice grew ever fainter and fainter, and the desire to make peace with him grew stronger and stronger.

If he would only come before they had returned from Yedlina! But an hour passed, then another, and a third, and he did not come. Then it occurred to her that it was too late for him to come at this hour, and that he would send some one for his cap.

She decided to send a letter together with the cap, and in that letter she resolved to say all that weighed upon her heart. And as the messenger might come at any moment, she wanted to prepare everything in advance. She locked herself in her room and began to write;

"May God forgive you for the vexation in which you left me, for if you could have looked into my heart you would not have acted as you did. Therefore I am not only returning to you your cap, but am also adding a kind word, that you may be happy and that you forget——"

Here she noticed that she was writing not as she was thinking. She felt that it was not at all necessary for her that he should forget, and therefore she began to write another letter, with still greater agitation.

"I am sending you your cap because I know that I will never see you again in Belchoncki, and you will not cry about anybody, and certainly not about an orphan like me; and I shall not cry about you, either, for you were unjust toward me, and however sorry I should feel for you, I shall not cry——"

But she contradicted herself, for large tear-drops immediately fell upon the paper. How should she send such a proof, especially that it came from the very depths of her heart? After a while it appeared to her that it would be better not to write at all about his injustice and vehemence toward her, because that might anger him still more. While thinking in this strain she began to look for a third sheet of paper, but she could not find it. She was disarmed, for if she were to ask Pani Vinicka for paper she would have to undergo a cross-examination and to answer questions which she could not answer very well. Panna Seninska felt that she was losing her head, and that she could under no circumstances write to Tachewski just what she would like to write; she was terribly fatigued, and, woman-like, seeking for relief in her sorrow, she again gave vent to her tears.

It became dark by that time. Bells were heard jingling in front of the house. Pan Pongowski was returning home with the guests. Everywhere in the house lamps were lit—

night was closing in. The girl wiped her tears away and entered the drawing-room, fearing lest they might find out that she had been crying, and they might think God knows what, or they might ply her with questions. But only Pan Pongowski and Pan Grotus were in the room; Pan Ciprianowicz was not there, and Panna Seninska, desiring to direct attention from herself, immediately began to inquire about him.

"He went to his son and to the Bukoyemskis," replied Pan Pongowski. "But I have calmed him on the road; I told him that nothing serious had happened."

Then he looked at her steadfastly, and his usually morose face and gray, stern eyes beamed with a particular kindness. He came nearer to her, placed his hand on the girl's fair hair, and said:

"You are worrying in vain. They will all be well within two days. Well, well, that's enough! We are obliged to be grateful to them, it is true, and therefore I have taken their part; but in reality these people are strangers to us—they are not our equals."

"Not our equals?" she repeated, like an echo, in order to say something.

"Of course not! for the Bukoyemskis are paupers and Ciprianowicz *homo novus*. But, then, what have I to do with that? They'll go away, and everything will go on quietly as before."

Panna Seninska thought that it would, indeed, be too quiet while the three would remain in Belchonchki, but she did not utter her thought aloud.

"I'll go and see about supper," she said.

"Go, little housewife, go," replied Pan Pongowski. "You afford the house both joy and profit!"

And he added:

"Order to serve on the silver plate. We will show this

Ciprianowicz that Armenian nobles are not the only wealthy people."

Panna Seninska ran into the servants' room; but, as she wanted to attend to a more important matter before supper, she called over a young servant and said to him:

"Listen, Voitushek! Run to Virombki and tell Pan Tachewski that the young lady sends her heartiest compliments and this cap. Here's a *grosh* (a coin), and repeat what you are to tell him."

"The young lady sends her compliments and the cap."

"Not simply compliments, but heartiest compliments. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"Well, then, run. And take your fur coat, for it's getting colder again, and let the dogs follow you. 'Heartiest compliments,' remember, and come back right away, if Pan Tachewski does not give you a written answer."

Having done this, she went to the kitchen to order supper, for which the host and the guests were waiting. Then she dressed herself, adjusted her hair and came out into the dining-room.

Old Ciprianowicz met her tenderly, because her youthfulness and beauty had touched his heart already in Yedlina. And, as he felt quite at ease on his son's account, he spoke to her at supper merrily, and even jested in order to disperse the sorrow which he saw on her brow, and which he ascribed to what had happened during that day.

But the supper ended rather unpropitiously for her, for right after the second course had been served Voitushek appeared at the threshold of the dining-room and, warming his frozen fingers with his breath, yelled:

"The cap, lady, I left there, but Pan Tachewski isn't in Virombki any more, because he went away with priest Voinowski."

Pan Pongowski, hearing this, was surprised; he knitted his brows and, fixing his iron eyes on the young servant, asked:

"What's that? Which cap? Who sent you to Virombki?"

"The young lady," replied the youth, frightened.

And, seeing all eyes turned to her, she became terribly confused. But this lasted only for a brief while; her cunning feminine mind immediately came to her aid.

"Pan Tachewski brought here the wounded," she said; "but as auntie and I did not receive him well, he became angry and went home without his cap, and I sent it away to him."

"Yes, it is true that we did not receive him well," remarked Pani Vinicka.

Pan Pongowski heaved a sigh of relief and his face grew less stern.

"You have done well," he said. "And as for the cap, I would have sent it back to him, too, because in all probability he has no other one."

But the honorable and judicious Pan Ciprianowicz took Tachewski's part.

"My son," he said, "does not bear him any grudge. They themselves have brought about this duel, and, after all, he took them to his house, dressed their wounds and treated them properly. The Bukoyemskis say the same thing, and they add that he's such a master of the sword that if he only wished it he could have cut them differently. Yes! They wanted to teach him a lesson, and, instead, they found a teacher. If it is true that His Highness the King is going against the Turks, then such a man as Tachewski would be useful to him."

Pan Pongowski was not too glad to hear these words, and he said, at length:

"Voinowski, the priest, taught him those tricks."

"I saw Father Voinowski only once, at a festival mass," said Pan Ciprianowicz, "but I heard a great deal about him when I was in the army. At the mass other priests laughed at him, saying that his house was like the ark, and that he, like Noah, cared for all kinds of living creatures. I know this, however: his sword was great, and his spiritual virtue is now still greater. If Pan Tachewski has learned all this from him, I should very much like that my son, when he recovers, should seek no other friendship."

"There is a rumor that the Diet will soon issue a call for volunteers," said Pan Gedeon, wishing to change the topic of conversation.

"Yes; now they are busying themselves with that over there," put in Pan Grotus.

And the conversation turned to the war. But after supper Panna Seninska, choosing the right moment, came over to Ciprianowicz and, raising her blue eyes to him, said:

"You are very kind, very kind!"

"What makes you say that?" asked Ciprianowicz.

"You have taken Yatzek's part."

"Whose part?"

"Pan Tachewski's. His name is Yatzek."

"So! But you yourself have censured him severely. Why did you do that?"

"My guardian censured him still more severely. But I confess to you we have acted unjustly, and I think that we ought to make some reparation to him."

"He would undoubtedly be delighted to receive any consolation from you."

The girl shook her golden head in sign of disagreement.

"Oh, no," she replied, with a sad smile; "he is now angry at me forever."

Ciprianowicz glanced at her with a kind, fatherly look.

"But who, O charming little flower—who could be angry with you forever?"

"Oh, Pan Yatzek could! But, as for reparation, the best thing would be for you to tell him that you bear him no ill-will, and you are convinced of his innocence. Then my guardian would be forced to do him some justice, and that should be done."

"I see that you were not particularly harsh toward him, since you plead for him so heartily."

"That is because I feel reproaches of conscience, because I wish to offend nobody, because he is all alone in the wide world, and because he is very, very poor!"

"Then let me tell you what I have decided to do. Your guardian, as a kind host, has declared that he will not let me go from here until my son will have recovered completely, although Stanislav and the Bukoyemskis could be taken home even to-morrow. But before we leave I shall surely go to see Pan Tachewski and Father Voinowski—not merely out of kindness, but out of conviction that it is my duty to do this. I do not say that I am bad, but I think that if there is one who is really good, it is you. Don't contradict me!"

Yet she did contradict him. She felt that it was not merely a question of justice toward Yatzek; it was also a question of other matters of which Pan Ciprianowicz, not initiated in her maiden calculations, could know nothing. Nevertheless, her heart filled with gratitude toward him, and on bidding him 'good-night' she kissed his hand, which made Pongowski very angry.

"They are nobles only of the third generation; before that they were traders," he said. "Remember your noble descent!"

## CHAPTER VII.

Two days later Yatzek went with his ten ducats to Radom to dress himself properly for the journey. Father Voinowski remained at home thinking of how to get money enough for the equipment of a warrior, for a wagon, for horses and a man-servant—all of which an officer must have, if he cares for respect and does not wish people to look down on him.

Thus one day Father Voinowski sat at his small table, wrinkled his brows till his white hair fell over his forehead, and began then to reckon how much would be needed. His “animalia”—that is, the dog Filus, the tame fox and a badger—were rolling balls near his feet; but he gave them no attention whatever, so tremendously was he occupied and troubled, for the “reckoning” failed every moment. It failed not merely in details, but even in the main principles.

The old man rubbed his forehead more and more violently, and at last he said to himself aloud:

“He took ten ducats with him. Very well. Of that, beyond doubt, he will have nothing left. Let us count farther: From Kondrat, the brewer, five as a loan; from Słoninka, three. That makes eight. From Duda, six Prussian thalers and a saddle-horse, to be paid for in barley, if there will be a harvest. Total, eight golden ducats, six thalers, and twenty ducats of mine—too little! Even if I should give him the Wallachian as an attendant, that would be, counting his own mount, two horses; and for a wagon two

more are needed, and for Yatzek at least two more. It is impossible to go with fewer, for if one horse should die he must have another. And a uniform for his man, and supplies for the wagon, kettles and cover and camp-chest. Tfu! He could only join the dragoons with such money."

Then he turned to the animals, which were now still noisier.

"Be quiet, you rascals, or I'll sell your hides to a Jew!"

And again he went on talking to himself:

"Yatzek is right—he will have to sell Virombki. Still, if he does, he will have nothing to answer when any one asks him where he comes from. 'Whence?' 'From Wind.' 'Which Wind?' 'From the Field.' Immediately every one will slight such a person. It would be better to mortgage the place, if a man could be found to give money. Pan Pongowski would be the most suitable person, but Yatzek would not hear of Pan Pongowski, and I myself would not talk with him on that subject. My God! People are mistaken when they say 'poor as a church-mouse'! A man is often much poorer. A church-mouse has St. Stephen; he lives in comfort and has his wax at all seasons. O Lord Jesus, who multiplied loaves and fishes, multiply these few ruddy ducats and these few thalers; for to Thee, O Lord, nothing will be diminished, and Thou wilt help the last of the Tachewskis."

Then it occurred to him that the Prussian thalers, since they came from a Lutheran country, could rouse only abhorrence in heaven; as to the ducats, he hesitated whether to put them under Christ's feet for the night—would he find them there multiplied in the morning? He did not feel worthy of a miracle, and he struck himself a number of times on the breast in repentance for this insolent idea. He could not dwell on this longer, however, for some one had come to the front of his house.

Soon the door opened and a tall, gray-haired man entered. He had black eyes and a wise, kindly countenance. The man bowed on the threshold.

"I am Ciprianowicz of Yedlina," said he.

"Yes; I saw you in Pshitik, at your festival, but only at a distance, for the throng there was great," said the priest, approaching his guest. "I greet you on my humble threshold with gladness."

"I have come hither with gladness," answered Pan Ciprianowicz. "It is an important and pleasant duty to salute a knight so renowned and a priest who is so saintly."

Then he kissed the old man on the shoulder and the hand, though the priest warded off these acts, saying:

"Ho, what saintliness! These beasts here may have before God greater merit than I have." But Pan Ciprianowicz spoke so sincerely and with such simplicity that he won the priest immediately. They began at once, therefore, to speak pleasant words which were heartfelt.

"I know your son," said the priest; "he is a cavalier of worth and noble manner. In comparison, those Bukoyemskis seem simply serving-men. I will say to you that Yatzek Tachewski has conceived such a love for Pan Stanislaw that he is forever praising him."

"And my Stashko treats him in like manner. It happens frequently that men fight and later on love each other. None of us feel offense toward Pan Tachewski; nay, we should like to conclude with him real friendship. I have just been at his house in Virombki, expecting to find him. I wished to invite to Yedlina you, my benefactor, and Pan Tachewski."

"Yatzek is in Radom, but he will return, and would doubtless be glad to serve you. But have you seen how they treated him at Belchonchki?"

"They have seen that themselves," said Pan Cipriano-

wicz, "and are sorry—not Pan Pongowski, however, but the women."

"There are few men so stubborn as Pan Pongowski, and he incurs a serious account before the Lord sometimes for this reason. As for the women, God be with them. Let them go; what is the use of hiding the fact that one of them caused the duel?"

"I divined that before my son told me. But the cause is innocent."

"They are all innocent. Do you know what Ecclesiastes says of women?"

Pan Ciprianowicz did not know; so the priest took down the Bible and read an extract from Ecclesiastes.

"What do you think of that?" asked he.

"There are women even of that kind."

"Yatzek is going to the war for no other cause, and I am far from dissuading him; on the contrary, I advise him to go."

"Do you? Is he going soon? The war will come only next summer."

"Do you know that to a certainty?"

"I do, for I inquired, and I inquired because I cannot keep my own son from it."

"No, because he is a noble. Yatzek is going immediately, for, to tell the truth, it is painful for him to remain here."

"I understand, I understand everything. Haste is the best cure in such a case."

"He will stay only as long as may be needed to mortgage Virombki or sell it. It is only a small strip of land. I advise Yatzek not to sell, but to mortgage. Though he may never come back, he can sign himself always as from it; and that is more decent for a man of his name and his origin."

"Must he sell or mortgage in every case?"

"He must. The man is poor, quite poor. You know how much it costs to go to a war, and he cannot serve in a common dragoon regiment."

Pan Ciprianowicz thought for a while, and said:

"My benefactor, perhaps I would take a mortgage on Virombki."

Father Voinowski blushed as does a maiden when a young man confesses on a sudden that for which she is yearning beyond all things; but the blush flew over his face as swiftly as summer lightning through the sky of evening; then he looked at Pan Ciprianowicz and asked:

"Why do you take it?"

Pan Ciprianowicz answered with all the sincerity of an honest spirit:

"I want it since I wish, without loss to myself, to render an honorable young man a service, for which I shall gain his gratitude. And, Father benefactor, I have still another idea. I will send my one son to that regiment in which Pan Yatzek is to serve, and I think that my Stashko will find in him a good friend and comrade. You know how important a comrade is, and what a true friend at one's side means in camp, where a quarrel comes easily, and in war, where death comes still more easily. God has not, in my case, been sparing of fortune, and He has given me only one son. Pan Yatzek is brave, sober, a master at the sabre—as has been shown—and he is virtuous, for you have reared him. Let him and my son be like Orestes and Pylades—that is my reckoning."

Father Voinowski opened his arms to him widely.

"God Himself sent you! For Yatzek I answer as I do for myself. He is a golden fellow, and his heart is as grateful as wheat land. God sent you! My dear boy can now show himself as befits the Tachewski escutcheon; and, most important of all, he can, after seeing the wide world,

forget altogether that girl for whom he has thrown away so many years and suffered such anguish."

"Has he loved her, then, from of old?"

"Well, to tell the truth, he has loved her since childhood. Even now he says nothing; he sets his teeth, but he squirms like an eel beneath a knife-edge. Let him go at the earliest, for nothing could or can come from this love of his."

A moment of silence followed; then the old man continued:

"But we must speak of these matters more accurately. How much can you lend on Virombki? It is a poor piece of land."

"Even one hundred ducats."

"Fear God, your grace!"

"But why? If Pan Yatzek ever pays me, it will be all the same how much I lend him. If he does not pay, I shall get my own, also; for, though the land about here is poor, that new soil must be good beyond the forest. To-day I will take my son and the Bukoyemskis to Yedlina, and you will do us the favor to come as soon as Pan Yatzek returns to you from Radom. The money will be ready."

"Your grace came from heaven with your golden heart and your money," said Father Voinowski.

Then he commanded to bring mead, which he poured out himself, and they drank with much pleasure, as men do who have joy at their heart-strings. With the third glass the priest became serious.

"For the assistance, for the good word, for the honesty, let me pay," said he, "even with good advice."

"I am listening."

"Do not settle your son in Virombki. The young lady is beautiful beyond every description. She may also be honorable; I say naught against that. But she is a Seninska. Not she alone, but Pan Pongowski is so proud of this

that if any man, no matter who, were to ask for her, even Yakobus, our King's son, he would not seem too high to Pan Pongowski. Guard your son; do not let him break his young heart on that pride, or wound himself mortally like Yatzek. Out of pure and well-wishing friendship do I say this, desiring to pay for your kindness with kindness."

Pan Ciprianowicz drew his palm across his forehead as he answered:

"They dropped down on us at Yedlina as from the clouds because of what happened on the journey. I went once to Pan Pongowski's on a neighborly visit, but he did not return it. Noting his pride and its origin, I have not sought his acquaintance or friendship. What has come came of itself. I will not settle my son in Virombki, nor let him be foolish at Pan Pongowski's mansion. We are not such an ancient nobility as the Seninskas, nor perhaps as Pan Pongowski; but our nobility grew out of war, out of that which gives pain, as Charnietski described it. We shall be able to preserve our own dignity; my son is not less keen on that point than I am. It is hard for a young man to guard against Cupid, but I will tell you, my benefactor, what Stashko told me when recently at Pan Pongowski's. I inquired about Panna Seninska. 'I would rather,' said he, 'not pluck an apple than spring too high after it, for if I should not reach the fruit I would feel disgraced.'"

"Ah! he has a good thought in his head!" exclaimed Father Voinowski.

"He has been thus from his boyhood," added Pan Ciprianowicz, with a certain proud feeling. "He told me, also, that when he had learned what the girl had been to Tachewski, and what he had passed through because of her, he would not cross the road of so worthy a cavalier. No, my benefactor, I do not take a mortgage on Virombki to

have my son near Pan Pongowski's. May God guard my Stanislaw and preserve him from evil."

"Amen! I believe you as if an angel were speaking. And now let some third man take the girl, even one of the Bukoyemskis, who boast of such kinfolk."

Pan Ciprianowicz smiled, drank up his mead, took farewell and departed.

Father Voinowski went to the church to thank God for that unexpected assistance, and then he waited for Yatzek impatiently.

When at last Yatzek came the old man ran out to the yard and seized him by the shoulders.

"Yatzek," exclaimed he, "you can give ten ducats for a crupper. You have one hundred ducats, as it were, on the table, and Virombki remains to you."

Tachewski fixed on Father Voinowski eyes that were sunken from sleeplessness and suffering, and asked, with astonishment:

"What has happened?"

Indeed, a really good thing had happened, since it came from the heart of an honest man.

Father Voinowski noted with the greatest consolation that Yatzek, in spite of his terrible suffering and all his heart-tortures, received, as it were, a new spirit on learning of the agreement with Pan Ciprianowicz. For some days he spoke and thought only of horses; there was no place for aught else in him.

"There is your medicine, your balsam; here are your remedies," repeated the priest to himself; "for if a man entrapped by a woman, and never so unhappy, were going to the army he would have to be careful not to buy a sickly horse; he would have to choose swords, and fit on his armor, try his lance once and a second time, and, turning

from the woman to more fitting objects, find relief for his heart in them."

And he remembered how, when young, he himself had sought in war either death or forgetfulness. But since war had not begun yet, death was still distant from Yatzek in every case; meantime he was filled with his journey and with questions bound up in it.

There was plenty to do. Pan Ciprianowicz and his son came again to the priest, with whom Yatzek was living. Then all went to the city together to draw up the mortgage.

There, also, they found a part of Yatzek's outfit; the remainder the experienced and clear-headed priest advised to search out in Warsaw or Cracow. This beginning of work took up some days, during which young Stanislaw, whose slight wound was almost healed, gave earnest assistance to Yatzek, with whom he contracted a more and more intimate friendship. The old men were pleased at this, for both held it extremely important. The honest Pan Ciprianowicz even began to be sorry that Yatzek was going so promptly, and to persuade the priest not to hasten his departure.

"I understand," said he, "I understand well, my benefactor, why you wish to send him away at the earliest; but, in truth, I must tell you that I think no ill of that Panna Anusya. It is true that immediately after the duel she did not receive Pan Yatzek very nicely, but remember that she and Pani Vinicka were snatched from the jaws of the wolves by my son and the Bukoyemskis. What wonder, then, that at the sight of the blood and the wounds of those gentlemen she was seized with an anger, which Pan Pongowski roused in her purposely, as I know. Pan Pongowski is a stubborn man, truly; but when I was there the poor girl came to me perfectly penitent. 'I see,' said she, 'that

we did not act justly, and that some reparation is due to Pan Yatzek.' Her eyes became moist immediately, and pity seized me, because that face of hers is comely beyond measure. Besides, she has an honest soul and despises injustice."

"For God's sake, don't say a word to Yatzek about this, for his heart would rush up to his throat again, and barely has he begun to breathe now in freedom. He ran away from Pan Pongowski's bareheaded; he swore that he would never go back to that mansion, and God guard him from doing so. Women, you see, Pan Ciprianowicz, are like will-o'-the-wisps which move at night over the swamp lands at Yedlina. If you chase one it flees; if you flee it pursues you. That is the way of it!"

"That is a wise remark, which I must repeat to Stanislaw," said Pan Ciprianowicz.

"Let Yatzek go at the earliest. I have written letters already to various acquaintances, and to dignitaries whom I knew before they were dignitaries, and to warriors the most famous. In those letters your son, too, is recommended as a worthy cavalier; and when his turn comes to go he shall have letters, also, although he may not need them, since Yatzek will prepare the way for him. Let the two serve together."

"I thank you from the depth of my soul. Yes! Let them serve together, and may their friendship last till their lives end. You have mentioned the regiment of Alexander, the King's son, which is under Sbierzhkhowski. That is a splendid regiment—perhaps the first among the hussars—so I should like Stashko to join it. But he said to me: 'The light-horse for six days in the week, and the hussars, as it were, only on Sunday!'"

"That is true," answered the priest. "Hussars are not sent on scouting expeditions, and it is rare, also, that they

go skirmishing, as it is not fitting that such men should meet all kinds of faces; but when their turn comes they so press on and trample that others do not shed so much blood in six days as they do on their Sunday. But, then, war, not the warrior, commands; hence, sometimes it happens that hussars perform every-day labor."

"You, my benefactor, know that better than any man."

Father Voinowski closed his eyes for a moment, as if wishing to recall the past more in detail; then he raised them, looked at the mead, swallowed one mouthful, then a second, and said:

"It happened toward the end of the Swedish war, when we went to punish that traitor, the Elector, for his treaties with Karl. Pan Lubomirski, the marshal, took fire and sword to Berlin. I was then in his own regiment, in which Victor was lieutenant. The Brandenburger tried to check us, now with infantry, now general militia, in which were German nobles; and I tell you that at last, on our side, the arms of the hussars and the Cossacks of the household seemed almost as if moving on hinges."

"Was it such difficult work then?"

"It was not difficult, for at the mere sight of us the muskets and the spears trembled in the hands of those poor fellows as tree branches tremble when the wind blows around them; but there was work daily from morning till twilight. Whether a man thrusts his spear into a breast or a back, it is labor. Ah! but that was a lovely campaign; for, as people said, it was active, and in my life I have never seen so many men's backs and so many horse rumps as in that time. Even Luther was weeping in hell, for we ravaged one-half of Brandenburg thoroughly."

"It is good that treason came to its merited punishment."

"Of course it is good. The Elector appeared then and begged Lubomirski for peace. I did not see him, but later

on soldiers told me that the marshal walked along the square with his hands on his hips, while the Elector tripped after him like a whip-lash. The Elector bowed so that he almost touched the ground with his wig, and seized the knees of the marshal. Nay! they even said that he kissed him wherever it happened; but I give no great faith to that statement, though the marshal, who had a haughty heart, loved to bend down the enemy; but he was a polite man in every case, and would not permit things of that kind.

“God grant that it may happen with the Turks this time as it did then with the Elector.”

“My experience, though not lofty, is long, and I will say to you sincerely that it will go, I think, as well or still better. The marshal was a warrior of experience, and especially a lucky one; but, still, we could not compare Lubomirski with His Grace the King reigning actually.”

Then they mentioned all the victories of Sobieski and the battles in which they themselves had taken part. And so they drank to the health of the King and rejoiced, knowing that with him as a leader the young men would see real war; not only that, but, since the war was to be against the ancient enemy of the cross, they would win immense glory.

In truth, no one knew anything yet about the war. It was not known whether the Turkish power would turn first on the republic or the empire. The question of a treaty with Austria was to be raised at the Diet. But at the meetings of nobles men spoke of war only. Statesmen who had been in Warsaw, and at the court, foretold it with conviction; and, besides, the whole people had been seized by a feeling that war must come—a foreboding almost stronger than certainty, and based on the former deeds of the King, also on the desire and destiny of the people.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON the road from Radom priest Voinowski invited the old Ciprianowicz and his son to his house, and they were all to go together with Yatzek to Yedlina. In the meantime three of the Bukoyemskis appeared there unexpectedly. Marek was still too sick to be about, but Matvey, Lukash and Yan came to offer their compliments to the old man and to thank him for his care of them when they were sick. True, Yan was short of a finger on one hand, and the older brothers had big scars—one had it on his forehead, the other on the cheek—but they had by this time completely recovered and were as strong as bulls.

Two days before they had been hunting in the forest; they had surrounded a sleeping she-bear, speared her, and brought the young bear as a gift to Father Voinowski, whose love for beasts of the forest was well known everywhere.

The old man liked the "plain-hearted boys." He was glad they came, and that they brought him the young bear; and he almost shed tears from laughter when the cub seized one of the glasses filled with mead and began to roar in order to save his booty by inspiring terror. Then, seeing that no one wanted to take the mead away from him, the bear got up on his hind legs and drank the mead like a man, which increased the merriment.

"Well, I shall not make him my butler, or keeper of my bee-hives!" said the priest, amused intensely.

"Yes!" exclaimed Stanislaw Ciprianowicz, laughing. "He hasn't been long at the Bukoyemskis' school, but he learned from them more in a single day than he could have learned in a lifetime in the forest."

"That's not true!" replied Lukash. "This beast has natural wit. He knows what is good and what is bad. No sooner had we taken him out of the forest than he fell to drinking vodka as if he had been in the habit of drinking it every morning; and then he struck a dog on the snout, as though saying, 'There, take this; don't be sniffing!' and he went off to sleep."

"Thanks to you, I'll have real amusement," said the priest. "Still, I'll not make him my butler. Although he knows a great deal about drinks, he would attend to them too diligently."

"Bears can do more than that," remarked Yan. "Father Glominski, of Pshitik, has a bear that plays the organ. But some people are chagrined, for at times he begins to roar, especially when some one strikes him with a stick."

"There should be no cause for chagrin here," said the priest; "birds build nests in churches and sing to the glory of God, and no one is chagrined by that. Every beast serves God, and the Saviour was even born in a manger."

"Besides, they say," interposed Matvey, "the Lord Jesus turned a miller into a bear; so it may be the human soul remained in the bear."

"Then you have killed the miller's wife, and must answer," said the old Ciprianowicz. "His Highness the King guards his bears very jealously, and he does not keep the foresters to kill the bears."

At these words the three brothers became embarrassed, and it took some time for Matvey to say something in self-defense.

"Very well; but are we not nobles? The Bukoyemskis are as good as the Sobieskis."

But Lukash was struck by a happier thought, and his face began to beam.

"We gave our word as knights not to shoot bears," he said. "Well, we don't shoot them—we spear them."

"His Highness the King is not thinking of bears at present," remarked Yan; "and, besides, nobody will report to him about it. Let any forester dare say a word—eh! Still, it is a pity that we boasted before Pan Pongowski and Pan Grotus. Pan Grotus is going to Warsaw, and, as he sees the King frequently, he may mention this to him."

"When did you see Pan Pongowski?" asked the priest.

"Yesterday. He was accompanying Pan Grotus. Do you know, venerable Father, the inn called Mozdovnya? They stopped there to feed their horses, and they found us there. Then Pan Pongowski began to ask us many questions, and he asked also about Yatzek.

"About me?" inquired Tachewski.

"Yes. 'Is it true,' he asked, 'that Tachewski is going to the war?' 'It is true,' we said. 'When?' 'Soon, we think.' Then Pan Pongowski said, 'That's good, but, of course, he will join the infantry?' We all burst out laughing, and Matvey replied, 'Make no such supposition, for Yatzek is now our friend, and we should have to side with him.' Pan Pongowski realized what kind of men we were, and he said, 'I say this not that I bear him ill-will, but because I know that Virombki is not a great estate in Poland.' "

"An estate or no estate, it's enough for him!" exclaimed the priest. "Pan Pongowski need not break his head about it."

"But it was evident that Pan Pongowski thought otherwise, and he did bother his head about Yatzek's fate, for

an hour later the servant, who brought in a new bottle of mead, brought also a sealed letter.

"There is a messenger from Belchonchki," he said.

Father Voinowski took the letter, broke open the seal, struck the paper with the back of his hand, walked over to the window and began to read. Yatzek turned pale from emotion; he looked upon this letter as a miracle-working *ikon*, because he felt that there was something about him in the letter. His thoughts, like scared swallows, flew through his head. "What if the old man is repenting?" he thought. "What if he is excusing himself? It must be so; it cannot be otherwise. Pongowski had no right to be more angry at me for what has happened than at those who suffered in consequence of the duel. Now his conscience has awakened; he realizes the injustice of his conduct; he understands now how painfully he insulted an innocent man, and he desires to smooth over the injustice."

Yatzek's heart began to beat faster. "Oh, I must go!" he said to himself. "Happiness is not for me, and though I shall forgive, I cannot forget. I shall go. Before leaving I should like to see once more that cruel yet beloved Anusya; to have a good look at her once more; to hear her voice once more. Refuse not my prayer, O merciful God!"

And his thoughts rushed more swiftly than swallows; but before they had passed something unexpected happened. Father Voinowski crushed the letter in his hand, and he felt at his left side, as if seeking his sword. The blood rushed to his face, his neck swelled and his eyes flashed lightnings. He was simply so terrible that the old Ciprianowicz and his son and the Bukoyemskis looked at him with astonishment, for he looked as if he had suddenly been turned into a different man.

Deep silence reigned in the room.

In the meantime the priest bent toward the window, as

if looking down at some object; then he turned away, cast a glance at the walls of the room, then at the guests; but he apparently controlled himself, for his face regained its usual color and the fire in his eyes grew dull.

"Gentlemen," he said, "that man is not only excitable, but altogether wicked. To say in excitement something which is not true may be excused—that may happen to anybody; but to continue to abuse maliciously and trample upon the offended one is not the deed of a noble or of a Christian."

Saying this, he bent down, picked up the crumpled letter and turned to Tachewski.

"Yatzek, if there is still some sore spot left in your heart, cut it out with this knife. Read, poor fellow, read aloud, for you have nothing to be ashamed of; it is he who wrote the letter that should feel ashamed. Let everybody know what kind of man Pan Pongowski is."

With trembling hands Yatzek seized the letter, opened it and read:

"Most Esteemed Priest, Benefactor, etc., etc.:

"Having learned that Tachewski of Virombki, who used to frequent my house, is at present about to join the army, I, bearing in mind the bread with which I nourished him in his poverty, and also the services which he rendered to me at my orders from time to time, am sending to him a horse, and a ducat to shoe the horse, with the warning not to waste the money on some other unnecessary matter.

"I have the honor to remain, etc., etc."

Yatzek grew so pale while reading the letter that those present had fears for him; especially was the priest afraid lest this pallor should be the herald of an outburst of madness. He knew well how terrible the young man was in his

anger, though usually so mild, and he began to calm him at once.

"Pongowski is an old man, and he has lost one arm," said the priest, quickly. "You cannot challenge him."

But Tachewski did not fly into a passion, for at the first moment an immeasurable and painful amazement overcame all other feelings within him.

"I cannot challenge him," he repeated, like an echo; "but why does he trample on me?"

The old Ciprianowicz rose, took both Yatzek's hands, shook them firmly, kissed him on the forehead, and added:

"Pan Pongowski has injured himself, not you, and if you will disdain revenge, everybody will admire your magnanimity, which is worthy of the blood flowing in your veins."

"These are words of wisdom!" cried the priest, "and you must try to prove worthy of them."

Then Stanislav Ciprianowicz embraced Yatzek.

"Believe me," he said, "I love you now all the more."

But this turn of affairs did not at all appeal to the Bukoyemskis, who were gnashing their teeth all this time. Following Stanislav's example, they, too, embraced Yatzek.

"Be it so," said Lukash, at length. "I should know what I had to do if I were in Yatzek's place."

"What would you do?" asked the other brothers, with curiosity.

"I don't know myself just now what I would do, but I would have thought of something and would not forgive him."

"If you don't know, don't speak!"

"Why, do you know?"

"Be quiet!" said the priest. "I shall not leave this letter unanswered. Still, to disdain revenge is a truly Christian act."

"Of course! Yet you felt for your sword at your side at the first impulse."

"That is because I carried a sword for a long time. *Mea culpa!* But there is another circumstance—Pan Pongowski is an old man with only one arm. This is not to be settled with steel. And I tell you, that is why I am disgusted with this rancorous old man, who makes use of his impunity in so disgraceful a manner."

"Our neighborhood will now be too narrow for him," said Yan Bukoyemski. "I wager my head that not a single decent soul will cross the threshold of his house."

"But it is necessary to write an answer," said the priest, "and at once."

But who was to answer—Yatzek, for whom the letter was intended, or the priest, to whom it was directed? It was decided that the priest should write the letter. Tachewski himself settled the question.

"To me that entire household and all the people in it are as dead," he said. "And it is their luck that I say this in the depth of my heart."

"That's it! The bridges are burnt!" added the priest, seeking pen and paper.

To this Yan Bukoyemski replied:

"It is well that the bridges are burnt, but it would be better if Belchonchki had gone up in smoke! In the Ukraine it was this way: if a newcomer came and settled among us, and if he could not get along with his neighbors, he was cut up into pieces and his property went up in smoke."

Nobody paid any attention to these words—none save old Ciprianowicz, who waved his hand impatiently, and replied:

"You came to these regions from the Ukraine, I came from the outskirts of Lwowo, and Pongowski from Pomozye; thus, according to you, Pan Tachewski might count us

all as intruding newcomers. But you must know that the republic is an immense house occupied by a family of nobles, and a noble is at home in every nook and corner."

Silence ensued. Only the squeaking of a pen and words in an undertone, which, dictated to himself, were heard from behind the screen.

Tachewski buried his face in his hands and sat for several minutes motionless; then he straightened himself, looked around at those present, and said:

"There is something I cannot understand."

"Neither do we understand," replied Lukash Bukoyemski; "but if you will drink some more mead, we will also drink."

Yatzek mechanically poured out mead into the glasses, and, following the course of his own thoughts, went on:

"Of course, Pan Pongowski had a right to feel offended because I brought on this duel while we were in his house—although such things will happen everywhere. But he knows that it was not I that challenged; he knows that he has unjustly insulted me under my own roof; he knows that you and I are on peaceful terms now; he knows that I will never show myself in his house again. Still he pursues me; still he is trying to trample on me——"

"True; there must be some special animosity in this," said old Ciprianowicz.

"Are you, too, of the opinion that there must be something hidden here?"

"Where?" asked the priest, coming out from behind the screen with a ready letter.

"In this particular animosity against me."

The priest glanced at the shelf, where, among other books, was the Holy Bible, and he said:

"I will tell you what I have told you before—there is a woman in the case."

And he turned to his guests:

“Shall I read for you what Ecclesiastes says about woman?”

But he could not finish, for Yatzek jumped up as if burnt by a red-hot iron; he thrust his fingers into his hair and almost shouted with inexpressible grief:

“Then I understand it still less, for if any one in the world—if to any one in the world—if there is any one that I—I have given all my soul——”

He could not say another word, for the pain in his heart clutched his throat as in iron clasps, and gathered in his eyes in the form of two large, bitter, burning tear-drops which rolled down his cheeks.

The priest understood him well.

“My Yatzek,” he said, “it is better to burn out the wound, even though it should cause terrible pain, than to let it fester; that is why I do not spare you. Eh! I was also a soldier, in my time; therefore I understand many things. I know that regret and remembrance, no matter how far a man may travel, drag after him like dogs, and howl in the night time, and rob him of his sleep. Well, what then? It is better to kill them at once. At this moment you feel that you would give all your blood for the sake of that house; therefore it seems so strange and terrible to you that vengeance should pursue you from that direction. And all this appears to you impossible, but it is very simple; for if you have wounded the pride and self-respect of a woman—if they thought that you would squeal and you have not squealed—if, when you were beaten, you did not crawl at her feet, but, instead, broke your chain and ran away—you shall know that you will never be forgiven, and the hatred of a woman, with which the hatred of a man can never compare, will always pursue you. There is but one remedy against that: break your feeling, even on

your own heart, and cast it away as far as you can, like a broken bow—that's what you should do."

And again there was a minute of silence. Old Ciprianowicz shook his head, confirming the priest, and, as a man of experience, admired his words of wisdom.

Yatzek repeated:

"It is true that I have tugged at my chain and broken it. It is not Pongowski that pursues me."

"I know what I would do," suddenly declared Lukash Bukoyemski; "I would have written to him myself."

"No!" said the priest, impatiently; "not Yatzek will write, but I, and it is not becoming to me to listen to your advice."

Here he turned to Ciprianowicz and to Yatzek.

"It was a difficult task, for I had to break the horns of his malice in a diplomatic manner, and at the same time show him that we understand whence the sting came. Listen, and if any one of you should make a practical suggestion I shall accept it with pleasure."

And the priest began to read:

"'Noble Pan Pongowski, my dear neighbor and brother——' "

Here he struck the letter with his hand and said:

"You will observe, gentlemen, that I do not write 'my benefactor, but 'my dear.' "

"That will do for him! Go ahead!"

"Well, then listen: 'It is known to all citizens of our republic that only those people know how to observe due politeness under all circumstances who have mingled with polite people from their very childhood, or who have brought such politeness into the world together with their noble blood and renowned name. As neither one nor the other has come to you, my dear neighbor, as a portion, the noble Pan Tachewski, who inherited from his renowned

ancestors both noble blood and a noble soul, forgives you your rude words, and also sends back your rude gifts. And as you, like some innkeeper, mention the hospitality which was extended to the noble Pan Yatzek Tachewski in your house, dear neighbor, the above-mentioned Pan Tachewski is ready to pay all expenses, adding such gratuity as seems proper to his inborn generosity.' ”

“By God!” old Ciprianowicz interrupted him, “Pongowski will actually choke with his own blood when he reads this.”

“It was necessary to bring down his pride, and at the same time burn all bridges—Yatzek himself wanted that.”

“Yes, yes!” exclaimed Tachewski, feverishly.

“Now listen; this I write from myself: ‘I have inclined Pan Tachewski to see that, though the bow is yours, the poisoned arrow with which you intended to strike the worthy young knight is not in your own quiver. Reason, like strength, grows fainter as the years go by, and senile old age easily yields to suggestions from others, thus deserving more indulgence. Here I end this letter, adding, as a priest and a servant of God, that the nearer the end of one’s life, the less becoming it is to man to be the servant of hatred and haughtiness—that man should rather think more of the salvation of his soul, something which I wish myself and you. Amen. I remain, etc., etc.’ ”

“All is written as it should be,” said old Ciprianowicz; “there’s nothing to be added, nothing to be taken out.”

“Well,” said the old priest, “do you think he gets what he deserves?”

“Oh, as you were reading, certain words burnt me.”

“And me, too,” added Lukash Bukoyemski. “Really, when a man hears such words he feels like having a drink, as on a very hot day.”

"Yctzek, treat those dear guests of ours, and I will meanwhile seal the letter and send it off."

Saying this, he took the ring from his finger and went behind the screen. But before sealing the letter another idea must have come to his mind, for he came out and said:

"Ready. The thing is done. But— isn't it too harsh? He's an old man—it may cost him his health. Wounds dealt by the pen are no less painful than those by the sword or the bullet."

"True, true!" said Tachewski, setting his teeth together firmly.

But this outcry of pain settled the matter. Old Ciprianowicz said:

"Esteemed priest, your reasoning is noble, but Pongowski had no such scruples. His letter aimed straight at the heart, while yours aims only at his pride and malice. I think the letter should be sent away."

And the letter was sent away. Then all began to hasten the preparations for Tachewski's departure.

## CHAPTER IX.

TACHEWSKI's friends, however, did not foresee that the priest's letter would, in a way, be of use to Pan Pongowski in his home policy.

Indeed, he received the letter not without anger. Yat-zek, whom he had so far regarded merely as an obstacle, became now an object of hatred, although he did not write the letter himself. This hatred bloomed in the stubborn old heart of Pan Pongowski like a poisonous flower; but his cautious mind determined to make use of the priest's letter.

Pan Pongowski restrained his fierce rage, his face assumed a look of contemptuous pity, and he went with the answer to Panna Seninska.

"For our kindness we were beaten," said he. "I did not wish this, for I am a man of experience, and I know people; but when you clasped your hands and said that injustice had been done—that I had exceeded in sternness and you had been too severe to him—that he ought not to leave us in anger—I yielded. I sent him a horse. I sent him assistance in money. I thought he would come and bow down, give us thanks, take farewell as became a man who had spent so much time under our roof; but see what he has sent us in answer!"

At these words he drew the priest's letter from his girdle and gave it to the Panna Seninska.

She began to read, and soon her dark brows met in

anger; but when she reached the place where the priest declared that Pan Pongowski wished to humiliate Yatzek, thanks to the suggestions of another, her hands trembled, her face turned scarlet, then grew pale and remained pale. Though Pan Pongowski saw all this, he feigned not to see it.

"May God forgive them for what they attribute to me," said he, after a moment of silence. "He alone knows whether my ancestors are much below the Tachewskis, of whose greatness more fables than truths are related. What I cannot forgive is this: that they pay you, my poor dear, for your kindness of an angel, with such ingratitude."

"It was not Pan Yatzek who wrote this, but Father Voynowski," said Panna Seninska, seizing, as it were, the last plank of salvation, like a drowning person clutching at a straw.

"Do you believe, girl," inquired he, "that I love you?"

"I believe," answered she, bending and kissing his hand. He stroked her fair head with great tenderness.

"Though you believe," he said, "you do not know that you are my whole consolation. Rarely do I permit myself words such as these, and rarely do I tell that which my heart feels, since former suffering is concealed in it. But you should understand that I have only you in the world. I would increase hourly, not your disappointment, pain and trouble, but your joy and happiness. I do not ask what began to bud in your heart, but I will say this to you: whether that was, as I think, a pure, sisterly feeling, or something more, that young man was unworthy. He has heaped on us ingratitude in return for our sincere friendship. My dearest, you would deceive yourself if you were to think the priest wrote this letter without Yatzek's knowledge. They wrote it together; and do you know why they replied with such insolence? As I have heard, Ta-

chewski got money from that Armenian in Yedlina. That is what he needs, and now since he has it he cares for naught else, and for no one any longer. This is the truth, and in your soul you must acknowledge that to think otherwise would be willing self-deception."

"I see," answered the girl.

Pan Pongowski meditated a while.

"People say," he declared, finally, "that it is the habit of old people to praise past times and lay blame on the present. But this is not so. The world is growing worse—people are becoming worse. In my day no man would have acted as would Tachewski. Do you know the first cause of this? That night in the tree, which exposed this lord cavalier to the ridicule of people. To hurry, as it were, to help some one, and then climb a tree, out of terror, may happen; but in such a case it is better not to boast of it, for it is ridiculous, ridiculous! I do not hold up the Bukoyemskis or Pan Stanislaw as heroes; they are drunkards, swash-bucklers—I know them! Our lives were less in their minds than were the wolf-skins. But there is lurking in him such envy that he could not forgive them that chance aid which they gave us. Out of that rose the duel. May God punish me if I had not reason to be angry. They made friends after the duel, for it is clear that our cavalier understood that he could get money from Pan Ciprianowicz, so he preferred to turn his malice against this mansion. Pride, animosity, ingratitude and greed—those are the things which he has manifested, and nothing more. He has injured me. Never mind. God forgive him! But why should he attack you, my dear flower? A neighbor for long years, who called on us daily. A gypsy in such a position would become faithful; a swallow grows used to its roof, a stork returns to its nest; but he spat on our house as soon as he felt in

his purse a coin of the Armenian's. No, no! No man in my day would have acted in that style."

Panna Seninska listened, her palms clasping her temples, and with eyes looking out before her fixedly; so Pan Pongowski stopped and looked at her once, and a second time.

"What is the matter with you?" asked he.

"Nothing; but I am so sad that words have deserted me."

And, finding no words, she found tears. Pan Pongowski let her cry till she had finished.

"It is better to let that sadness pass off with tears than let it stay in the heart and be petrified. Ah, it is hard! Let him go; let him clink other men's coin; let him touch the mud with his saddle-cloth; let him strut as a lord and court Warsaw harlots. But we will remain here, my girl. That is no great delight, it is true; but still it is a delight, if you remember that no one in this house will deceive you, no one here will offend you, no one will break your heart—that here you will be always as an eye in the head of each person; that your happiness will be the first question always, also the last question of my life. Come!"

He stretched his arms toward her, and she fell on his breast with emotion and gratitude, as she would on the breast of a father who was comforting her in a moment of suffering.

Pan Pongowski fell to stroking her bright head with the one hand that remained to him, and long did they linger there in silence. Meanwhile it was growing dark; the frosty window-panes glittered in the moonlight, and dogs made themselves heard here and there with prolonged barking.

The warmth of the maiden's body penetrated to the heart of Pan Pongowski, which began to beat with more vigor;

and, since he feared to make a declaration too early, he would expose himself, then, to temptation.

"Stand up, child," said he. "You will not weep now?"

"I will not," answered the girl, kissing his hand.

"You see! Ah, this is it! Remember always that there is a place where it will be calm for you and pleasant. Every young man is glad to race over the world like a tempest, but for me you are the only one. Fix this well in mind. More than once, perhaps, have you thought, 'My guardian seems a savage wolf; he is glad to find some one to shout at, and he has no understanding of my young ideas.' But do you know of what this guardian has thought and is thinking at present? Often of his past happiness, often of that pain which, like an arrow, is fixed in his heart—that is true; but besides that only of you and of your future, only of this: to secure every good thing for you. Pan Grotus and I talked whole hours of this. He laughed because, as he said, one thought alone remained with me. My one point was to secure to you after my death even a sufficient quiet morsel."

"May God not grant me to wait for that!" cried she, bending again to the hand of Pan Pongowski.

And in her voice there was such sincerity that the stern face of the old noble was radiant with genuine joy for the moment.

"Do you love me a little?"

"Oh, guardian!"

"May God reward you, child! My age is not yet so advanced, and my body, save for the wounds in my heart and my person, would be sufficiently stalwart. But, as men say, death is ever sitting at the gate, and knocks at the door whenever it pleases. If that should happen, you would be alone in the world with Pani Vinicka. Pan Grotus is a kind man and wealthy; he would respect my

testament and wishes; but as to other relatives of my late wife—who knows what they would do? Her relatives might wish to resist and raise lawsuits. There is need to have foresight in all things. Pan Grotus gave advice touching this case; true, it is effective, but strange, and therefore I will not speak to you yet of it. I should like to see His Highness the King—to leave you and my will to his guardianship; but the King is occupied now with the Diet and the coming war. Pan Grotus says that if there is war the troops will move first under the hetmans and His Majesty will remain at Cracow. Perhaps then—perhaps we shall go together. But, whatever happens, know this, my child: all my possessions will be yours, though I should have to follow at last the advice of Pan Grotus—even though for one hour before death. Yes, so help me God! for I do not cast my words to the wind; I am not such a useless, frivolous man as Tachewski is.”

## CHAPTER X.

PANNA SENINSKA returned to her room, filled with gratitude toward her guardian, who had never before spoken to her so sincerely; and at the same time she was disenchanted, saddened and disgusted with everybody—with the whole world. At first she could not think calmly. She felt that a grievous wrong had been done her, that she was mortally abused, and that a painful disappointment had come over her.

For her kind heart, for her compassion, for her yearning, for all that she had done to bind the broken knots together, her only reward was hate and suspicion. And there was no remedy. She could not, of course, write to Yatzek a second time, to explain her position and to justify herself. A blush of shame and humiliation covered her face at the mere thought of this. Besides, she was almost sure that Yatzek had gone. And, then, the war was coming on; perhaps she would never behold him in life again; perhaps he would fall and die with the conviction that a perverse and wicked heart was in her bosom. Suddenly she was seized with boundless grief. Yatzek stood before her eyes as if living, with his swarthy face and those pensive eyes, at which she had laughed more than once, saying that they were the eyes of a maiden.

Her thought flies like a swallow after the knight and calls to him: "Yatzek! I wish you no evil. God sees my heart, Yatzek!"

Thus she calls to him, but he makes no answer; he rides ahead, and if he does think of her, he only frowns and spits aside.

Again there are pearls on her eyelids. A certain meekness has come on her, a moment of resignation, in which she says to herself: "Ah, this is difficult! May God forgive him, and go with him, and never mind!"

But her lips quiver like those of a child, her eyes look like those of a tortured bird, and somewhere off in a hidden corner of her soul, which is as pure as a tear, she blames God in the deepest secret for that which has met her.

Then, again, she felt certain that Yatzek had never loved her; and she could not understand why he had not loved her, even a little.

"My guardian spoke truly," said she.

But later on came reflection.

"No; that could not be."

Immediately she recalled those words of Yatzek, which were fixed in her memory as in marble: "Not you will go—I will go; but I will tell you that, though I have loved you during all these years better than my health, better than my life, better than my own soul, I shall not come back here; I will bite my fingers in my grief, but I'll not come back, so help me God!" When he said this he was as pale as the white wall, and he seemed almost mad from anger and suffering.

He had not come back; that was true! He had appeared no more; he had left her; he had renounced her; he had abandoned her; he had wronged her; with an unworthy suspicion he and the priest had composed the dreadful letter—all that was true, and her guardian was right in that. But that Yatzek had never loved her; that after he had found money he had departed with a light and joyful heart;

that he thought of paying court to others; that he had ceased altogether to think of her—this was incredible. Her guardian might think so in his carefulness, but the truth was quite different. He who has no love does not grow pale; does not set his teeth; does not clench his fists; does not rend his soul in anguish. Such being the case, the young lady thought the difference was only this: that, instead of one, two were now suffering. Hence a certain consolation, and even a certain hope, entered her. The days and months which were to come seemed gloomier, it may be, but not so bitter. The words of the letter ceased to burn her like red-hot iron; for, though she doubted not that Yatzek had assisted in the writing, it is one thing to act through sorrow and pain, and another through deliberate malice.

So again great compassion for Yatzek took hold of her; so great was it, and especially so ardent, that it could not be simply compassion. Her thoughts began to weave and turn into a certain golden thread, which was lost in the future, but which at the same time cast on her the glitter of a wedding.

The war will end; so will their parting end.

That stubborn Yatzek would not return to Belchonchki. Oh, no! a man so resolute as he when once he says a thing will adhere to it; but he will come back to these parts and return to Virombki; he will live nearby, and then that will happen which God wishes. He went away, it may be with tears, it may be with pain, with wringing of hands. God comfort him! He will come home with a full heart, and with joy, and—especially after the war—with great glory.

Meanwhile she will be there quietly in Belchonchki, where her guardian is so kind; she will explain to that guardian that Yatzek is not so bad as other young men—and farther on moved that golden thread which began to wind round her heart again.

The goldfinch in the Dantzic clock of the drawing-room whistled out a late hour, but sleep flew from the young lady altogether.

Lying now on her bed, she fixed her clear eyes on the ceiling and considered what dispositions to make of her troubles and sorrows. If Yatzek had gone, it was only because he was running away from her; for, according to what she had heard, war was still far from them. Her guardian had not mentioned that young Stanislav and the Bukoyemskis were to go away, also; it was proper to come to an understanding with them and learn something of Yatzek, and say some kind word which might reach him through them, even in distant camp and in war time.

She had not much hope that those gentlemen would come to Pan Pongowski's, for it was known to her that they had gone over to Yatzek, and that for a certain time they had been looking with disfavor on Pan Pongowski; but she relied on another thing.

In some days there would be a festival of the Most Holy Lady—a great festival—at the parish church at Pshitik, where all the neighboring nobles assembled with their families. She would see Pan Stanislav and the Bukoyemskis, if not in front of the church, then at dinner in the priest's house. On that day the priest received every one.

She hoped, too, that in the throng she would be able to speak with them freely, and that she would not meet any hindrance from her guardian, who, though not very kind toward those gentlemen recently, could not break with them in view of the service which they had shown him.

To Pshitik from Belchonchki the road was rather long, and Pan Pongowski, who did not like to hurry, passed the night at Radom, or at Yedlina, if he chose the road through the latter place.

This time, because of the overflow, they took the safer,

though longer, road through Radom, and started on the eve of the festival on wheels, not on runners, for winter had suddenly broken. Pani Vinicka began to sing the morning prayers in the dark, and the young lady and Pan Gedeon joined her with very drowsy voices, for the evening before they had gone to bed late because of preparations for the journey. Only beyond the village and the small forest, in which thousands of crows found their night rest, did the ruddy light shine on the equally ruddy face and drowsy eyes of the young lady. Her lips were fixed ready for yawning; but when the first sun-ray lighted the fields and the forest she shook herself out of the drowsiness and looked around with more sprightliness, for the clear morning filled her with a certain good hope and a species of gladness.

The calm, warm, coming day promised to be really wonderful. In the air appeared, as it were, the first note of early spring.

After unparalleled snows and frosts came warm, sunny days all at once, to the astonishment of people. Men had said that from the New Year it seemed as if some power had cut off the winter, as it were, with a knife-blade; and herdsmen foretold by the lowing of cattle, then restive in stables, that the winter would not come back again. In fact, spring itself was then present. In furrows, in the forest, at the north side of woods and along streams strips of snow still existed; but the sun was warming them from above, and from beneath were flowing out streams and currents, making in places broad overflows, in which were reflected wet, leafless trees, as in mirrors. The damp ridges of fields gleamed like belts of gold in sun-rays. At times a strong wind rose, but so filled with gladsome warmth as if it came from out the sun's body directly, and, flying over the fields, wrinkled the waters, throwing down with its

movement thousands of pearls from the slender, dark twigs of the tree branches. The road was very muddy, and the heavy carriage, drawn by six horses, moved very slowly and with difficulty. As the sun rose more and more, the air grew so warm that Panna Seninska untied the ribbons of her hood, which dropped to the back of her head, and unbuttoned her weasel-skin coat.

"Are you so warm?" inquired Pani Vinicka.

"Spring, auntie, real spring!" replied the girl.

She was so charming, with her bright and somewhat disheveled head, with her laughing eyes and rosy face, that the stern eyes of Pan Pongowski grew mild as he glanced at her. For a while he seemed as if looking at her then for the first time, and spoke, as if half to himself, half to her:

"Upon my word, you are not worse than spring!"

She smiled in answer; then she said, after a while:

"Oh, how slowly we are moving!"

"The road is so bad! Is it not true that before starting on a long journey one should wait till the road dries somewhat?"

Pan Pongowski's face became serious, and he looked out of the carriage without giving an answer.

He rose, looked ahead, and said, soon after:

"Yedlina!"

"Shall we, perhaps, go to the church?" inquired Pani Vinicka.

"No; first, because the church is sure to be closed, for the priest has gone to Pshitik, and second, because he has offended me greatly, and I will not give him my hand when he offers me his."

Then he added: "I ask you, and you, also, Anusya, not to converse with him in any way."

A moment of silence ensued. Suddenly the tramping of

horses in the mud was heard behind the carriage; then loud voices were heard on both sides of the carriage.

"We bow to you! We bow to you!"

"We bow to you!" answered Pan Pongowski.

"Are you bound for Pshitik?"

"I go every year. I suppose you are going there, too?"

"Of course," replied Marek. "One must be purified from sin before war comes."

"But is it not early yet?"

"Why should it be too early?" asked Lukash. "All sins we have committed until now will fall from our shoulders, since that is the use of absolution; and as to sins incurred later, the priest absolves from those on the battlefield, *in particulo mortis*."

"You wish to say *in particulo*."

"It's all the same, if only repentance is real."

"How do you understand repentance?" inquired the amused Pan Pongowski.

"How do I understand repentance? Last time the priest commended that we give one another thirty lashes in discipline, and we gave fifty; for we thought: 'Well, since this pleases the Heavenly Powers, let them have all they want of it.'"

At this even the serious Pani Vinicka laughed, and Panna Seninska hid her face in her broad sleeve as if to warm it there.

Lukash noticed, as did his brothers, that their answer had aroused laughter, hence they were somewhat offended and silent; so for a time were heard only the rattling of chains on the carriage, the snorting of horses, the sound of mud under hoofs, and the croaking of crows. Immense flocks of these birds were sailing away in the sunlight from small places and villages to the pine woods.

"Ah! they feel this very minute that there will be food

even to wade in," said the youngest Bukoyemski, turning his eyes toward the crows.

"Yes; war is their harvest," said Matvey.

"They do not feel it yet, for war is far off," said Pan Pongowski.

"Far or near, it is certain!"

"And how do you know?"

"We all know what the talk was at the district Diets, and what instructions will be given to the general Diet."

"True; but it is not known if they were the same everywhere."

"Pan Pshilubski, who has traveled a great deal, says they were the same everywhere."

"Who is Pan Pshilubski?"

"He comes from Olkus, and makes levies for the Bishop of Cracow."

"But has the Bishop commended to make levies before the assembling of the Diet?"

"You see, this is the best proof that war is certain. The Bishop wants a splendid light cavalry regiment. Well, Pan Pshilubski came to these parts because he has heard of us somewhat."

"Oh, oh! Your glory has gone far through the world. Have you enlisted?"

"Of course!"

"All of you?"

"Why should we not all go? It is a good thing during war to have a friend at one's side, and still better a brother."

"Well; and young Ciprianowicz?"

"He and Pan Tachewski will serve in one regiment."

Pan Pongowski glanced quickly at the young lady sitting in front; a sudden flame rushed over her cheeks, and he inquired further:

"Are they so intimate already. Under whom will they serve?"

"Under Pan Sbierzkowski."

"Of course in the dragoons?"

"In God's name, what are you saying? That is the hussar regiment of Prince Alexander."

"Is it possible! Is it possible! That is no common regiment——"

"Pan Yatzek is no common man."

Pan Pongowski had it on his lips to say that such a strippling in the hussars would be a soldier, not an officer; but he held back the remark, fearing it might seem that his letter was not so polite or his help so considerable as he had told Panna Seninska. So he frowned and said:

"I have heard of the mortgage of Virombki; how much was given on it?"

"More than you would have given," answered Marek, drily.

Pan Pongowski's eyes glittered for a moment with savage anger; but he restrained himself a second time, for it occurred to him that further conversation might serve his purpose.

"All the better," said he, "the cavalier must be satisfied."

The Bukoyemskis, though slow-witted by nature, began to exaggerate, one more than the other, just to show Pan Pongowski how little Tachewski cared for him and all those that remained in Belchonchki.

"Of course!" called out Lukash. "When he went away he was almost wild from delight. He sang so that the candles at the inn toppled over. It is true that we had drunk some at parting."

Pan Pongowski looked again at Panna Seninska, and saw that the rosy face, full of youth, had become, as it were, petrified. Her hood had fallen off entirely, her eyes

were closed as in sleep; only from the movement of her nostrils and the slight quivering of her chin could it be known that she was not sleeping, but listening, and listening intently. It was painful to look at her; but the merciless noble thought:

"If there is still a wound in your heart I will pluck it out."

And he said aloud:

"Just as I expected."

"What did you expect?"

"That you gentlemen would be drunk at the parting, and that Pan Tachewski would go away singing. He who is seeking fortune must hurry, and if it smiles on him perhaps he may catch it."

Marek replied:

"Father Voinowski gave Tachewski a letter to Pan Sbierzkowski, who is his friend, and in Sbierkhova the land is such that you can sow onions in any place; and he has an only daughter, just fifteen years of age. So don't you bother about Tachewski; he will make his way without you, and without these sands around Radom!"

"I do not bother myself about him," said Pan Pongowski, drily. "But perhaps you gentlemen are in a hurry to ride on? My carriage moves in this mud like a tortoise."

"Well, we bow to you!"

Having said this, the brothers moved forward more speedily; but when they had ridden an arrow-shot from the carriage they halted again and talked with animation.

"Did you see?" asked Lukash; "for I struck both the girl and the old man."

"How? Tell us—do not hide!" called the brothers.

"Didn't you hear?"

"We heard; but repeat."

"I struck with what I said of Panna Sbierzkowski. You

saw how the girl became pale? I looked at her; she had her hand on her knee, and she opened and closed it, opened and closed it, just like a cat before scratching. She was boiling with anger."

But Matvey stopped his horse and added:

"I am sorry for her—such a dear little flower; and do you remember what old Ciprianowicz said?"

"What did he say?" inquired, with great curiosity, Lukash, Marek and Yan, stopping their horses.

Matvey looked at them a while through his protruding eyes, then said, as if in sorrow:

"But the trouble is that I have also forgotten."

Meanwhile not only Pan Pongowski, but Pani Vinicka, who generally paid but very little attention to what was happening around her, now noticed the changed face of the young lady.

"What is the matter, Anusya? Are you cold?"

"No," answered the girl, with a sort of sleepy voice which seemed not her own. "Nothing is the matter, only the air affects me strangely—so strangely."

And, though her voice fell immediately, there were no tears in her eyes.

On the contrary, certain peculiar sparks gleamed in them, and her face seemed to have aged.

Noticing this, Pan Pongowski asked himself:

"Shall I start to strike the iron while it is hot?"

## CHAPTER XI.

NOBLES from near and far-distant places gathered together at the festival in Pshitik. There were the Kokhanowskis, the Podgayetskis, the Silnitskis, the Potwozowskis, the Sulgostowskis, Ciprianowicz, with his son, and many others. But the greatest interest was aroused by the arrival of Field-Marshal Sandomerski-Chaztoriski, who stopped off at Pshitik on his way to Warsaw. He was going to the Diet, and now, waiting for the festival, he attended church with devotion. He talked willingly to everybody, spoke of the injustice which the Porte had committed on the republic while fixing the boundary of Podolia; he spoke of the invasions which, despite the treaty, again laid waste Russian lands, and he declared that war was imminent in the near future. He said that a treaty would surely be concluded with the Emperor, and that even the adherents of France would not come out openly against it; for the entire French Court, though generally unfriendly to the empire, knew full well the danger in which the republic found itself at the present time. Prince Michael could not say, of course, whether the Turks would first attack Cracow or Vienna; but of one thing he was sure—the enemy was near Adrianople, and that, aside from forces stationed under the command of Tyekeli, at Koshitsa, thousands were coming from Hungary, from Rumania, from Asia, from the shores of the Euphrates and the Tigris, from Africa, from the Red Sea down to the

boundless ocean. The nobles listened eagerly to the words of the old field-marshal—the older men, who knew of the great power of the pagans, with an expression of anxiety in their faces; the younger men with fire in their eyes.

But hope and enthusiasm predominated, for the memory of Khotim was still fresh in their minds; and at Khotim the reigning King, at that time only a hetman, leading the then insignificant Polish forces, attacked the great Turkish regiments and slashed them with their sabres and trampled them with their horses' hoofs! All were encouraged by the thought that the Turks, who rushed with irresistible daring on all the troops of other nations, grew faint-hearted when they had to face the terrible cavalry of "Lehistan" in the open field. Father Voinowski's sermon aroused still more hope and enthusiasm. Pan Pongowski was somewhat afraid lest there should be some insinuations in this sermon, which would censure his tactics with regard to Tachewski; but there was nothing of the sort. The priest gave himself up entirely, heart and soul, to the war and the mission of the republic. "Christ has chosen you," he said, "from among all nations; He has selected you to guard the others; He commanded you to stand under His cross and defend the faith with your blood, to the last drop, to the last breath within you! Before you is the field of glory, and, though you bleed to death, though spears and darts still pierce your body, arise, O lion of God, shake your mane and roar so loud that the marrow in the bones of the pagans will freeze for terror and that the Turkish standards and crescents will fall like trees uprooted by a tempest."

Thus he spoke to his knightly listeners; and, as he was an old soldier himself, as he had fought all his life and knew how things were on the battle-field, when he spoke to them of war it seemed to them that they saw the paint-

ings in the King's castle at Warsaw, on which various battles and Polish victories were represented.

"Now the regiments have started, the spears already lowered to the horse-ears, the warriors leaned forward in their saddles; amidst the pagans resounded a cry of alarm, and in the sky was joy. The Most Holy Mother runs over to the little window and calls, 'Come, my Son; see how the Poles are attacking!' Lord Jesus blesses them with the holy cross. 'God's wounds!' He exclaims. 'There are the nobles, there the warriors! Their reward is ready for them.' And Michael the Archangel strikes himself on the thighs, shouting: 'Strike the rascals! Strike!' Thus they rejoice in heaven, and our forces keep on striking them, overthrowing horses, people, standards; they trample over the bodies of Janizaries, over captured cannon, over rumpled crescents; they go toward glory, toward the performance of their destination, toward salvation and immortality."

When he, at last, finished with the words, "Christ is calling you, too; it is time for you, also, to start for the field of glory!" a stern exclamation and the clank of swords rang out in the church; and when the gospel was read all these swords were bared, and they glittered in the sun so that it seemed to the tender women that the war had begun already, and they burst into sobs, committing their fathers, husbands and brothers to the care of the Holy Virgin.

Then the Bukoyemskis, whispering among themselves, made a solemn vow to start immediately after the festival, and not to touch with their lips water, milk, or even beer until Easter, but to content themselves only with such drinks as keep up heat in the blood, and thus, also, daring.

The general enthusiasm was so great that even the stern Pan Pongowski could not resist it. For a moment he even

thought that, though he had lost his left hand, he could hold the reins in his teeth, and with his right hand avenge the wrongs which he had suffered from the cursed pagans; and, besides, he could regild his former services to the republic.

But he made no vow, leaving the matter for the future. Meanwhile the service was conducted with its usual splendor. Cannon, furnished for all great festivals by the Korkhanowskis, were fired from the cemetery. The swinging bells were roaring in the tower; the tame bear in the gallery worked with such a swing that the lead pipes almost flew from their settings; the church was filled with the smoke from censers and was quivering from the pressure of the people's voices. Mass was celebrated by prelate Tvorkowski, of Radom—a learned man, full of sentences, quotations, proverbs and edifying stories; at the same time he was a cheerful man, who knew the world thoroughly. For this reason many people turned to him for counsel in important matters.

Pan Pongowski turned to him, too—all the more readily because they were friendly. On the eve of the festival he was with him at confession; but when he began to tell him of his intentions with regard to Panna Seninska, the priest postponed this conversation for some other time, declaring that he hardly had time enough to hear of the sins of the people. He advised Pan Pongowski to send away the women after the festival to Belchonchki, and that he himself remain in his house at Radom, where, "*procul negotiis*," he could freely listen to him.

So it was. Next day they sat down before a bottle of fine Hungarian wine and a plate of roast almonds, which the priest was fond of eating with his wine.

"*Conticeo*," said the priest, "*intentusque os teneo*, speak."

Pan Pongowski took a drink from his glass and glanced at the prelate with some discontent, because he did not make it easy for him to start.

"Hm! I feel somewhat embarrassed, and I see that the thing will be more difficult than I had imagined."

"Then let me help you. Is it not of something holy that you wish to speak?"

"Of something holy?"

"Of course! Of something with two heads and four feet."

"What sort of a holy thing is that?" asked Pan Gedeon, amazed.

"That's a riddle! Guess it!"

"Most esteemed prelate, he who has serious affairs in his mind cannot solve riddles!"

"Think a while."

"Something holy, with two heads and four feet?"

"Exactly."

"By God! I can't guess it."

"It is holy matrimony. Is it not so?"

"By God, it is true! Yes, yes; that is just the thing I wanted to speak to you about."

"Is it about Anusya Seninska?"

"Exactly. You see, my benefactor, she is almost a relative of mine, but our relationship is so distant that no one could prove it. But I have become attached to her because I have reared her, and I am indebted to her family; for the Pongowskis, even as the Danilowskis and the Sobieskis, received everything either from the Seninskas or after them. I should like to leave all my possessions to the orphan; but, to be frank, the fortune of the Pongowskis has vanished after the Tartar invasion, and all I have is the estate of my deceased wife. This estate is mine, because it is in my name, but there is a great number of my wife's

relatives. First of all is Pan Grotus, the Starost of Rai-grod. But, then, I do not fear him, for he is a kind man and he has more than he needs. It was he who gave me this idea, although it had more than once occurred to me before. But my desire slumbered in the depth of my heart, and he merely aroused it. Still, besides Pan Grotus, there are the Sulgostowskis, the Kshepetskis, the Labezhowskis. These look upon the girl unfavorably even now; but how would they look upon her after my death? I will make a will, leaving everything to her, and they will go to court, lawsuits will commence, and what will the poor girl do? And I must leave her everything. There is attachment, there is gratitude—and these are strong links; and now I ask you, with a clear conscience: am I not bound to secure her at least in this way?"

The priest cracked an almond and shoved one-half to Pan Gedeon.

"Do you know why I like this almond? Because it is good. If it were wormy, I would not eat it."

"Well, what do you mean by that?"

"I mean to say that you like Anusya because she is an almond. Eh! And what an almond! But if she were fifty years old your conscience would be at ease concerning her future."

Pan Pongowski became confused; but the priest went on:

"I do not blame you at all, for there must be a good reason in everything, and such is the will of God that everybody prefers a young turnip to an old one. With wine it is different, and therefore we willingly submit to Providence with regard to wine."

"Yes; it is true that everything, except wine, is better the younger it is, and Pan Kokhanowski must have been jesting when he wrote that an old oak, like an old man, is always above a young one. The most important thing to

me is that if I leave my estate to my wife no one would dare to lay a finger on it; and if I were to leave it to her as a ward there will at once be many lawsuits, quarrels and, perhaps, even armed attacks. And who would protect her? Of course, not Pani Vinicka."

"That's quite true."

"But, as a judicious man, not a giddy youth, I did not wish to be guided by my own judgment alone; therefore I have come to you to be confirmed in the conviction that I am acting properly, and to be supported by your wise counsel."

The priest thought a while, and said:

"You see, it is difficult to give advice in such a matter, and you will more than once repeat with Boetius: '*Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses*'; or with Job: '*Stultus quoque si tacuerit, sapiens reputabitur*' (Even a fool, if he remain silent, will be considered a wise man). Your intentions, roused from awakened love, may be justified, and, as you bear in mind the welfare of the girl, they are even praiseworthy. But will not some harm come of this to her? Will it not be necessary to force her to go to the altar? I have been told that she and Yatzek Tachewski are in love, and I am telling you frankly, without beating about the bush, that while I was at your house I observed a thing or two."

"What have you seen?" asked Pongowski, abruptly.

"Nothing sinful, but signs which denote intimacy and love. I saw more than once that they held each other's hand longer than was needed, that they followed each other with their eyes—various things which prove secret feelings. You will say that this is not important! Of course it is not important. But that she, by the will of God, was more inclined toward him than he was inclined toward her, only a blind person would fail

to notice; and I am surprised that you have not seen it, and, if you did see it, that you did not put an end to it, since you had these intentions."

Pan Pongowski had seen and known all this; nevertheless, the priest's words made upon him a terrible impression.

It is one thing to hide something painful in your heart; it is quite another when somebody pushes his hand to your bosom and touches the sore spot. The old noble's face grew red, his eyes filled with blood, the veins stood out on his forehead. He breathed so heavily that the priest asked, with alarm:

"What is the matter with you?"

Pan Gedeon motioned with his hand, but made no reply.

"Drink some wine!" exclaimed the priest.

Pongowski took the glass with trembling hands, lifted it to his lips, took a sip, coughed, then whispered:

"My head began to reel."

"Because of what I said to you?"

"No. It has often happened to me of late, and now I am fatigued by the journey, by the fast, and by this early, unexpected spring."

"Then perhaps it would be better for you not to wait until May, but be bled immediately."

"I think so, too. But I will rest a minute, and we will return to this matter."

Some time elapsed before Pongowski recovered completely; the veins on his forehead relaxed, his heart began to beat normally; and he said:

"I will not say that my strength has given out, and if I were to squeeze this silver cup with my one hand I think I would easily make it as flat as a pancake. But health and strength are not the same thing, although both are in God's hand."

"Human life is frail!"

"That is why it is necessary to make haste. You speak of Tachewski and of the affection which the young people might feel toward each other. I will say frankly, I was not blind. I have also noticed that something was happening, but I noticed it only of late. You must remember that till recently she was a green berry, and even now she has barely ripened. He came every day, true, but then it may be that he had nothing to eat at home; that is why I received him—out of compassion. Priest Voinowski gave him lessons in Latin and in fencing, and I gave him food—that's all. He became of age only last year. I looked upon them as upon children whose minds were occupied with games and mischief, and I considered it a natural matter. But that such a pauper should dare to think—of whom? Of Panna Seninska! This, I confess, never entered my mind, and only toward the very end I began to notice something."

"A pauper is a pauper, but Tachewski——"

"Of Starvationville? No, my benefactor; he who licks other people's saucepans is a fit companion only for dogs. Thus, when I understood what was going on I began to watch him more closely; and do you know what I found? I found that he was not only a pauper and a sharper, but also a poisonous reptile, ever ready to sting the hand that was feeding him. Thank God! he is gone, but before leaving he stung not me alone, but also that innocent girl."

"So, that's the kind of man he is?" asked the prelate.

Pan Pongowski began to tell him how it happened, painting Tachewski's action in the blackest colors.

"Fear not, my benefactor," he said, concluding: "During our journey to Pshitik the Bukoyemskis added insult to injury—they filled the cup to overflowing; so that now Anusya feels no such abhorrence for any creature of God

as she feels for that sharper, that degenerate, that lazy-bones!"

"Compose yourself, for you will stir up your blood again."

"True. I did not wish to speak of this at all. I wished to say that it is not my intention to wrong the girl or to force her in any way. Persuasion is another matter. But that should be used by an outsider, by a mutual friend of ours, an influential man of great wisdom, who can speak eloquently, move the heart and convince the reason. Hence I wished to ask you, for I know your good-will toward me, and I feel sure that you will not refuse me—that you will do this not only out of friendship, but because you consider my cause right and worthy."

"It is a question of your good and of hers, therefore I shall not refuse," said the prelate; "but I should like to have time to consider what would be the best way of doing it."

"Then I go at once to the barber and have him bleed me, so as to return home with a clearer mind, and you think of the plan in the meantime. You will not find it difficult, and as for the other side, I think there will be no obstacle."

"There may be only one obstacle, Pan Pongowski."

"What is it?"

"Friendship is frank, and therefore I will speak to you frankly. You are an honorable man—I know that—but you are somewhat stubborn. Such is your reputation, and you have it because all those dependent on you fear you. Not only the peasants, on account of whom you have quarreled with Father Voinowski, but even your servants and attendants, everybody in the house. Tachewski feared you, Pani Vinicka fears you, and the girl also fears you. Usually two matchmakers come; I shall do all within my

power, but I am afraid that the other matchmaker may spoil my work."

Pan Pongowski's eyes flashed with anger for a moment; he did not like when people told him the truth to his face; but his anger was overcome by amazement, and he asked:

"Whom are you referring to? What other matchmaker?"

The priest replied:

"Fear."

## CHAPTER XII.

BUT they were unable to go that same day to Belchonchki, for Pan Pongowski had grown very weak after bleeding, and said that he needed rest. Next morning, however, he felt brighter, as though he had grown young, and he approached his house with good hope, though with a certain uneasiness. Completely occupied with his own thoughts, he spoke little along the way with the priest; but when they were entering the village, and when his uneasiness was growing more intense, he said:

"It is strange. Before this I usually came home as master, and all others were concerned as to how I would greet them; while now I feel concerned as to how they will greet me."

"Virgil has said," repeated the priest, "*'Amor omnia vincit'* (Love conquers everything); but he forgot to add *'mutat.'* This Delilah will not shear your locks, for you are bald; but I shall see you spinning at her feet, as Hercules spun at the feet of Omphale—that is certain."

"My nature is not of that kind. I have known always how to hold in my fists both servants and household."

"So people say; but for this very reason it would be right that some one should bridle you."

"The bridle is a dear one!" said Pan Pongowski, with a joyousness which for him was unusual. They drove very slowly, for the mud in the village was terrible; and, since they had started from Radom not before midday, night had fallen already. In the cottages at the two sides of the road light came from the windows and fell in red lines across the road. Here and there near the fence appeared some human

form, that of a woman, or of a man who, seeing the travelers, bared his head and bowed as low as his girdle. It was clear from these bowings, which seemed excessive, that Pan Pongowski held people in his fist—nay, more, that he held them too firmly, and that Father Voinowski blamed him not without reason for tyranny. But the old noble felt in his bosom a softer heart than had ever been in it till that evening; so, looking at those bent figures, and seeing the windows of those cottages leaning earthward, he said:

“I will do something for the peasants; Anusya always takes their part.”

“Of course, you must do something,” said the priest, and they became silent. Pan Pongowski was occupied for a time with his own thoughts; then he added:

“I know that you need no advice in this matter, but you must explain to the lady what a benefaction is becoming ready for her, and that I think about her first of all; but, in case of resistance, which I do not expect—well, then, even scold her in some degree.”

“You said that you did not wish to constrain her.”

“I said so; but it is one thing if I were to threaten, and another if some one else, who, besides, is a spiritual person, exposes her ingratitude.”

“Leave that task to me. If I have undertaken it, I will use my best efforts to accomplish it; but I will talk to the girl in the most tender way possible.”

“Very well, very well! But, one word more: She feels great abhorrence for Tachewski, but should there be any mention of him it would be well to say something more against him.”

“If I acted as you say, I would be *nequam*.”

“We are arriving. Well! In the name of the Father, and the Son——”

“And the Holy Ghost. Amen!”

They arrived, but no one came out to meet them; for the wheels made no sound because of the deep mud, and the dogs did not bark at the horses nor at the men, whom they recognized. It was dark in the hall, for the servants were evidently sitting in the kitchen; and it happened that when Pan Pongowski first called, “Is any one here?” no one came to him, and at the second call, in sharper tones, the young lady herself appeared.

She was holding a light in her hand, but, as her face was in the gleam of it and they in the darkness, she did not recognize them at once, and remained near the threshold. They did not speak for a moment, since, to begin with, it seemed a special sign to them that she had come out before others; and second, because her beauty astonished them as much as if they had never beheld it till that moment. The fingers with which she grasped the candle seemed transparent and rosy; the gleam crept along the bosom, lighted her lips and her small face, which looked somewhat drowsy and sad, perhaps because her eyes were in a deep shade, while her forehead and the glorious bright hair, which was as a crown just above it, were still in full radiance. And she, all in quiet and splendor, stood there in the gloom like an angel created from ruddy brightness.

“Oh, by God, a vision!” said the prelate.

Then Pan Pongowski called:

“Anusya!”

Leaving the light in a niche of the chimney, she ran to them and gave greeting joyously. Pongowski pressed her to his heart tenderly, commended her to rejoice at the arrival of a guest so distinguished—a man famous as a giver of counsel—and when, after greeting, they entered the dining-hall, he asked:

“Is supper over?”

"No. The servants were to bring it from the kitchen, and that is why no one was standing at the entrance."

The priest looked at the old noble and asked:

"Shall we take up the matter right away?"

"No, no," answered Pongowski; "Pani Vinicka will arrange everything."

And, indeed, Pani Vinicka arranged everything, and fifteen minutes later they sat down to heated wine and fried eggs. Priest Tvorkowski ate and drank well; but at the end of the supper he became serious, and he said, turning to the girl:

"My gracious young lady, God knows why people call me a counselor, but, since your guardian calls me so, I must speak with you on a certain matter which he has given my poor wit to accomplish."

The veins swelled on Pongowski's forehead; the young lady paled somewhat and rose, for, through some unknown reason, it seemed to her that the prelate would talk about Y'atzek.

"I beg you to come with me to another room," said he.

And they left the dining-hall.

Pan Pongowski sighed deeply once and a second time; then he drummed on the table with his fingers, and, feeling the need of talking down his internal emotions by words of some kind, he said to Pani Vinicka:

"Have you noticed how all the relatives of my late wife hate Anusya?"

"Especially the Kshepetskis," answered Pani Vinicka.

"They almost gnash their teeth when they see her; but soon they will gnash them still harder."

"Why?"

"You will learn in good season; but meanwhile we must get a room ready for the prelate."

Soon Pan Pongowski was alone. The servants came to

remove the supper dishes, but he sent them away with a quick burst of anger, and there was silence in the dining-hall; only the great Dantzic clock repeated loudly and with importance, "Tik-tak! tik-tak!"

Pan Pongowski placed his hand on his bald head and began to walk in the chamber. He approached the door beyond which the prelate was talking with Anusya; but he heard merely sounds, in which he distinguished the voice, but not the words, of the prelate.

So, in turn he walked and halted. He went to the window, for it seemed to him that there he would breathe with more freedom. He looked for a while at the sky with eyes from which expression had vanished—that sky over which the wind was hurrying the torn clouds of spring, with light on their upper edges, through which the pale moon seemed to rise higher and higher. As often as he rested an evil foreboding took hold of him. He looked through the window, close to which black limbs of trees were wrestling back and forth with the wind as if in torment; in the same way his thoughts were struggling back and forth—disordered, evil, resembling reproaches of conscience, and painful forebodings that some bad thing would happen, and that near punishment was waiting; but when it grew bright out of doors he was again filled with hope.

Every one has a right to think of his own happiness, and as for Yatzek Tachewski, it was of little importance what such people did! What was the question at present? The happiness and peace of a young girl. And, besides, life smiled on him a little in his old age—and this belongs to him. This only is real; the rest is wind, wind!

And he felt again that his head was reeling, and black circles danced before his vision; but this lasted very briefly. Then he approached the door behind which his fate was in the balance. Meanwhile the light on the table acquired a

long wick and the chamber grew gloomy. At times the voice of the prelate became sharper, so that words would have reached the ear of Pan Pongowski had it not been for that loud and continuous ticking.

It was easy to understand that such a conversation could not end quickly; still, Pan Pongowski's alarm grew and grew, turning, as it were, into certain wonderful questions woven into the past, with memories not only of former misfortune and pain, but also of former inextinguished transgressions, of former grievous sin, and of recent injustices inflicted not only on Tachewski, but on other people.

"Why and wherefore should you be happy?" asked his conscience.

And at that moment he would have given anything if even Pani Vinicka might return to the room, so that he should not be alone with those thoughts of his. But Pani Vinicka was occupied with work somewhere in another part of the house, while in this room only the clock kept ticking; and his conscience asked him again and again:

"Why should God reward you?" And Pan Pongowski felt now that if that girl, who was at once like a flower and an angel, should fail him, his life would be muffled in darkness which would last till the night of death should descend on him.

At this moment the door opened suddenly and Panna Seninska came out, with tears in her eyes. Behind her was the priest.

"You are weeping?" asked Pan Pongowski, with a hoarse, stifled voice.

"From gratitude, guardian," replied the girl, outstretching her hands to him.

And she clasped his knees.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THAT same night Pani Vinicka came into the room of her relative, and, finding her still dressed, she started a conversation with her.

"I cannot recover from amazement," said she. "I never expected that such an idea would come to the head of the old man."

"Neither did I expect it."

"Well, how is it, then? Will it really be so?"

"I don't know what to do—to be glad or not. We know that the prelate, as a spiritual person, has better judgment than laymen. He is right when he says that till death you will have a shelter—and your own, not another's. But Pan Pongowski is old"—here she spoke lower—"are you not a little afraid of him?"

"It is done, and there is nothing to think of at present," answered Panna Seninska.

"What do you say?"

"I say that I owe him gratitude for a refuge and a morsel of bread; and my person, for which no one else cares, is but a poor reward to him. But, since he cares, that is a new favor on his part."

"He wished for this long ago," said the old woman, mysteriously. "After he had talked to-day with you he called me. I thought that there was something wrong with the supper, and that he would reproach me, but he said nothing. I saw that for some reason he was cheerful, and all

at once he broke the news to me. My legs trembled under me."

" 'What is the matter?' asked he. 'You are turned, like Lot's wife, to a pillar of salt,' said he. 'Is it because I have taken such a mushroom?'

" 'No,' I answered, 'but because it is so unexpected.'

" 'With me,' said he, then, 'that is an old idea. Like a fish at the bottom of a river, it was unknown till some one helped it to swim to the surface. And do you know who that was?'

"I felt sure that it was the prelate.

" 'Not at all,' said he, 'but Pan Grotus.' "

A moment of silence followed.

"But I thought of Pan Tachewski," said Anusya, through her set teeth.

"Why Tachewski?"

"To show that he did not care for me."

"But you know that Tachewski has not seen Pan Pongowski."

She began to repeat, feverishly:

"Yes, I know! He had something else in his head! Let that go! I do not want to know anything. I do not, I do not! It is all finished, and finished well."

A dry, nervous weeping shook her bosom. After a moment she repeated again:

"It is finished beyond recall!"

Then they knelt down, praying "Our Father," which they repeated each evening in company.

Next day she appeared with a calm face; but something had changed in her, something remained unexpressed; something had shut itself up in her. She was not sad, but all at once she had grown, as it were, some years older, and she had in her now a certain calm dignity; so that Pan Pongowski, who hitherto had taken into account himself

only, began, without noting it, to consider her, also. In general he was unable to command himself, and it seemed to him especially strange that he felt in some sense his dependence on Anusya. He began to fear those thoughts which she did not express, but which she might conceal in her spirit. He tried to forestall such, and put in place of them others, of the kind which he wanted. Even the silence of Pani Vinicka was oppressive and seemed to him suspicious; so he worked out fantastic pictures, talked, joked; but at times gleams of anger flashed up in his steely eyes.

Meanwhile news of his engagement had spread through the neighborhood. Of this engagement he now made no secret; on the contrary, he sent letters announcing it to Pan Ciprianowicz and to his nearest neighbors; he wrote letters to the Kokhonowskis, to the Podlodowskis, to the Sulgotowskis, to Pan Grotus, to the Kshepetskis, and even to distant relatives of his late wife, with invitations to the betrothal, after which the marriage would be celebrated immediately.

True, Pan Pongowski would have preferred to ask for permission to dispense even with the publication of the banns, but unfortunately it was the Lenten season, and he had to wait till after Easter. He took both women, therefore, to Radom, where the young lady was to make her wedding outfit and he to buy better horses than those which were at that time in the Belchonchki stables.

Rumors came to him that among the relatives who had hoped to inherit everything, not only after his late wife, but after him, there was as much movement as there is in a beehive; but this pleased him, since he hated them all from his innermost spirit, and was planning at all times to harm them. Those tidings of meetings, whispered conferences and counsels shortened his visit to Radom. And when at last his stay there was ended, and the horses, to-

gether with new harness, were purchased, he returned on Easter eve to his mansion. Guests began to arrive almost at the same time, for the betrothal was to take place on the third day after Easter.

First came the Kshepetskis, who were both Pan Pongowski's relatives and nearest neighbors. The father was almost eighty years old, with the visage of a vulture and renowned as a miser. He had three daughters: Tekla, the youngest, was a pretty and cheerful girl; Agneshka and Johanna were old maids. He had a son, Martsian, nicknamed Penyok (Stump). He bore the name justly, for he looked very much like a big stump. He had a mighty chest and broad shoulders; his bow-legs were so short that he was almost dwarf-like, and his arms reached his knees. Some thought him a hunchback; he was not, however, but his head, without a neck, was fixed so closely to his body that his high shoulders reached his ears, very nearly. Out of that head peered prominent, lustful eyes, and his face was like that of a he-goat. A small beard, which he wore as if in defiance of general custom, increased the resemblance. He did not serve as a warrior, for he had been ridiculed in the army, for which reason he had to fight many duels. There was uncommon strength in his stumpy body, and people feared him in all places, since he was a quarreler and a road-blocker, who, in every affair, was glad to seek pretexts; he was as irritable as a vicious beast, and wounded savagely in Radom one Kshepetski, his cousin, a handsome and kind young man, who almost died of the injuries then inflicted. Not only his sisters, but even his father feared him; and he felt respect only for Yatzek, whose skill at the sabre was known to him, and before the Bukoyemskis, one of whom, Lukash, threw him over a fence like a bundle of straw once in Yedlina.

He had the deserved reputation of being a great proflig-

gate. Pan Pongowski had driven him out of the house a few years before that because he had looked too much in goat-fashion at Panna Seninska, who was a little girl at that time. But since then some years had passed, and, as they had met later in Radom, and in neighboring houses, Pan Pongowski invited him now to the family celebration.

Soon after the Kshepetskis came the Sulgostowskis, twin brothers, who so resembled each other that when they put on coats of like fashion no man could distinguish them. Next came three remote Sulgostowskis from beyond Prytik, and then the family of the nine handsome Zbierzowskis. From among the nearer neighbors came Pan Ciprianowicz, alone, for his son had gone to his regiment already; Podlotowski, the starosta, once the agent of the great lord in Zamostye; the Kokhanowskis; the priest from Pshitik; the prelate Tvorkowski, from Radom, who was to bless the wedding rings, and many nobles from near and distant places. Some came even without invitation, with this idea: that a guest, though quite unknown, would be sure to find welcome, and that when there is a chance to eat and drink, a man should not miss it.

Belchonchki was crowded with carriages and wagons; the stables were filled with horses, the outbuildings with servants of all sorts; everywhere in the house were colored coats, sabres, shaven heads. Latin was spoken here and there, and the twittering of women resounded above all. Maids were flying around with hot water, and tipsy servants with excellent wine in bottles. From morning until night hours the kitchen was streaming like a tar-pit. The windows of the house gleamed and flashed, so that the whole place around there was radiant. And Pan Pongowski moved through this crowd from room to room, magnificent, important, grown young, as it were, for the second time, dressed in crimson, and wearing a sabre which glittered

with jewels—a sabre which Panna Seninska had inherited; it was her only dowry from wealthy forefathers. If giddiness seized him, he leaned on an armchair; and again he moved forward, showed honor to guests who were personages, and struck one heel against the other when greeting older ladies; but, above all, he followed with eyes which were more and more enamored “his Anusya,” who bloomed in that colored throng. Amid glances which were frequently ill-wishing, frequently jealous, and filled sometimes with venom, she was as fair as a lily, timid, somewhat sad, or only conscious, it may be, of the importance of the event.

On the evening of the third day—Tuesday—the mortars of the mansion thundered, thus announcing to the guests and the village that the solemn moment of betrothal had come.

Then the guests formed a half-circle in the drawing-room—men and women in splendid costumes bright as a rainbow in the light of the candles. In front of them stood Pan Pongowski and Panna Seninska. Silence settled down, and the eyes of the people were fixed on the bride, who, with downcast eyes, with attention and dignity on her face, without a smile, but not sad, seemed as if drowsy. The prelate Tvorkowski, accompanied by Tekla Kshepetski, who held a silver plate with the wedding rings on it, advanced from the half-circle and addressed those who were soon to be married. He spoke learnedly, long, and with eloquence, explaining what “*sponsalia de futuro*” meant, and what great importance from the earliest days of Christianity was attached to betrothals. He quoted Tertullian and the Council of Trent, and, turning to Pan Pongowski and Panna Seninska, he explained to them how wise their decision was, what great benefaction they promised each

other, and how their future happiness depended on themselves only.

The guests listened with amazement, but also with impatience, for they looked on that marriage with repugnance. Pan Pongowski, who, from standing long, had grown dizzy, began to rest on one leg and then on the other, and to give signs with his eyes to the prelate to finish. These signs he was not quick to notice, but at last he blessed the rings and put them on the fingers of the betrothed.

Then the mortars thundered again in the yard, and from the gallery in the dining-hall was heard a loud orchestra, made up of five Radom Jews, who played nicely. The guests advanced in turn to congratulate the bridegroom and the bride with sour and insincere smiles. The two Kshepetski old maids simply jeered as they curtsied to their "aunt"; and Pan Martsian, when kissing her hands, recommended himself to her graces with such a goat glance that Pan Pongowski ought to have driven him from the house a second time.

But others, more remote relatives, being less greedy, expressed their sincere, cordial wishes.

Now the door of the dining-hall was thrown open; Pan Pongowski gave his arm to his betrothed, and after him moved the other couples, amid the glitter and the quivering of flames caused by a sudden cold gust which had blown through the entrance. From the hallway came the servants, half-tipsy, with decanters of wine and a number of dishes.

From the opening of doors there was such a cold air in the dining-hall that guests, while sitting down to the table, were seized the first moment with a shiver, while the flickering of candles made the whole hall, in spite of its elegant furnishing, seem dark and gloomy. But it was proper to hope that wine would soon warm the blood in all present, and wine was not spared by Pan Pongowski. He was rather

stingy in every-day life, but on exceptional occasions he liked so to show himself that people spoke long of him afterwards. This happened now. Behind every guest stood an attendant with a moss-covered bottle, while under the table were hidden a number of servants with bottles, also; so that in case a guest, unable to drink any more, should put down his glass on his knees, they filled it immediately. Immense glasses and goblets were in front of each man, but before the ladies were smaller glasses, either French or Italian.

The guests, however, did not occupy the whole table, for Pan Pongowski had commanded to set more plates than there were guests in the house. The prelate cast his eyes on those unoccupied places, and began to praise the hospitality of the house and the master; he rose in his chair somewhat, wishing to arrange the folds of his soutane, and those present supposed that he was going to offer the first toast, so they became silent.

"We are listening!" said a number of voices.

"Oh, there is nothing to listen to," said the prelate, merrily. "There is no toast yet, though the time will come soon for it. I see some of you gentlemen rubbing your heads rather early, and Pan Kokhanowski is whispering and counting on his fingers. It is difficult to expect rhymes from any if not from the Kokhanowskis. I wish to say, only, that it is an old Polish and praiseworthy custom to set the table for unexpected guests."

"Oh," answered Pan Pongowski, "as the house is lighted up, some one may come from the darkness."

"Perhaps some one is coming," said Kokhanowski. "Perhaps Pan Grotus?"

"No; Pan Grotus has gone to the Diet. If a man comes, it must be some one entirely unexpected."

"But the earth is soft—we shall not hear him."

"There, a dog is barking under the window; some one is coming."

"No one will drive in from that side, for the windows come out into the garden."

"And the dog is not barking—he is howling."

That was the case, really. The dog had barked once, twice, a third time; then the barking turned to a low howling.

Pan Pongowski quivered, despite himself, for he remembered how, years and years earlier, in another place, at his house in Russia, dogs had howled in the same way before a sudden invasion of Tartars.

And Panna Seninska thought that she had no one to expect any longer, and that should any man come to her from darkness to that lighted mansion he would be late in his coming.

But it seemed somehow strange to other guests, all the more as the first dog was joined by a second, and a double howl was heard now near the window. The guests listened in silence, which was broken, only after a while, by Martisian Kshepetski.

"What do we care for a guest at whom the dogs howl?" said he.

"Wine!" called Pan Pongowski.

But the glasses were full; hence there was no need to pour at that moment. Old Kshepetski, father of Martsian, rose from his chair somewhat heavily, wishing to speak, as seemed evident. All turned their eyes to him. Old men began to surround their ears with their hands to hear better; but he only moved his lips, after long waiting, his chin almost meeting his nose, for he was toothless.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the fact that the earth was soft from thawing, there came from the other side of the house, as it were, a dull clatter of wheels; and it was heard rather long, as if it went twice around the courtyard.

Hence old Kshepetski, who had raised his glass, held it a while; other guests acted in the same manner.

"See who has come!" said Pan Pongowski to his attendant.

The servant rushed out, returned soon, and answered:

"There is no one."

"That is strange," said the prelate Tvorkowski. "The sound was heard clearly."

"We all heard it," said one of the twin Sulgostowskis.

"And the dogs have stopped howling," said others.

Then the door of the entrance, badly fastened by the servant, as was evident, opened of itself, and a new draught of air entered with such violence that it quenched from ten to twenty candles.

"What is that?" "Shut the door!" "The wind blows out the candles!" said a number of voices.

But some unknown terror rushed into the hall with the wind. Pani Vinicka, who was superstitious and timid, began to cross herself audibly:

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy——"

"Be silent, madam!" interrupted Pan Pongowski.

Then, turning to Anusya, he kissed her hand.

"A quenched candle cannot disturb my joy," said he; "and God grant me to be as happy to the end of my days as I am at this moment. Is that not right, Anusya?"

She, too, bent toward his hand.

"Yes, guardian," said she.

"Amen!" ended the prelate.

He arose and began to address them:

"Ladies and gentlemen, since that unexpected sound has apparently paralyzed Pan Kshepetski's witty speech, let me be the earliest expounder of those feelings with which our hearts are filled. Hence, ere we cry out, 'O Hymen,' let

us raise this first toast to the coming happiness: '*Vivant, crescant, floreant!* and health of the betrothed.' "

"*Vivant, vivant!*" thundered all the guests.

Then the Radom orchestra resounded, and outside the windows the drivers fell to cracking their whips. The servants, too, raised a shout throughout the whole house, and in the dining-hall, amid endless cheers, rang the words:

"*Vivant, crescant, floreant!*"

And silence came only when Pan Pongowski stood up, raised his glass, and said, in a loud voice:

"My dear relatives, friends and guests! Before I express with inadequate words my gratitude to all, I will bow to you profoundly for that brotherly and neighborly good-feeling which you have shown me by coming together here under my poor roof in such numbers——"

The words "under my poor roof" were pronounced with a kind of marvelously mild and, as it were, submissive accent; then he sat down and bent his head, so that the forehead rested really on the table. And the guests wondered that a man usually so distant and so haughty should speak with such affection.

They thought that great happiness melts even the most obdurate hearts; and, waiting for what he had to say further, they looked at his iron-gray head resting yet on the edge of the table.

"Silence! We are listening!" said voices.

And, indeed, deep silence followed.

But Pan Pongowski was motionless.

"What is the matter?" "What has happened?" "For God's sake!" "Speak on!"

But Pongowski replied only with a terrible rattling, and his back and shoulders began to twitch.

Panna Seninska sprang from her seat, pale as a ghost, and cried, in a terrified voice:

“Guardian! guardian!”

Noise and confusion filled the room; cries and questions were heard everywhere.

The prelate seized him by the shoulders and brought him to the back of the chair. Some began to throw water on him; others suggested that he be taken to bed and bled at once. The women ran through the rooms with groans or with sobs.

Pan Pongowski remained sitting, his head thrown back, the veins in his forehead protruding, his eyes closed; the rattling grew ever louder.

The unexpected guest had come, indeed, out of darkness and entered his house, terrible and merciless.

## CHAPTER XIV.

AT the command of the prelate the servants took the sick man and carried him to the other end of the house, to the "chancery," which served Pan Pongowski also as a sleeping-room. They sent at once for the village blacksmith, who knew how to open a vein, and who bled men as well as animals. It soon appeared that the blacksmith was in front of the house, together with a crowd collected there for amusement, but unluckily he was dead-drunk. Pani Vinicka recalled that Father Voinowski was recognized throughout the neighborhood as an excellent physician, and a carriage was sent for him, though it seemed clear that there was no longer any hope for the sick man's recovery.

And so it really was. Except Panna Seninska, Pani Vinicka, the two Kshepetskis and Pan Labezhowski, who considered himself some kind of a physician, the prelate admitted nobody to the chancery, for fear the crowd might hinder recovery. All the other guests—women as well as men—gathered together in the adjoining drawing-room, where beds for the men had been provided; the crowd stood like a herd of scared sheep, filled with alarm and curiosity. And, watching the door, they waited for tidings, and some exchanged remarks in low voices concerning the terrible occurrence, and concerning the omens which had precast the misfortune.

"Did you notice how the flame of the candles quivered? and the lights were of a strange red color; it seems that Death had overshadowed them," said one of the Sulgostowskis.

"Death was among us, and we were not aware of it."

"And the dogs were howling at it."

"And that clatter of wheels? Perhaps Death came at that time."

"It seems God was against the marriage, which would have been an injustice to all relatives."

The whispering was interrupted by the appearance of Pani Vinicka and Martsian Kshepetski. She ran through the room, looking for the chest of relics with which to ward off evil spirits, and Martsian was immediately surrounded by the crowd.

"Well, how is he?"

Martsian shrugged his shoulders, raised them so that his head seemed almost on his chest, and said:

"He is still rattling."

"Is there no hope?"

"None."

At this time they heard distinctly through the half-open door Father Tvorkowski's solemn words:

*"Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis, et ob omnibus censuris, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen."*

All knelt and began to pray. Pani Vinicka passed among the kneeling people, holding the little chest with both hands. Martsian followed her and locked the door.

But before a quarter of an hour had passed Martsian appeared again and cried out, in his squeaking voice of a clarionet:

"He is dead!"

Then all, saying "Eternal memory," moved into the chancery, one by one, to cast a last farewell look at the deceased man.

By this time revolting scenes were enacted at the other end of the house, in the dining-room. The servants at Belchonchki had feared Pan Pongowski and had hated him

so bitterly that now it seemed to them together with his death their hour of freedom, joy and impunity had come. The servants of the guests also saw an occasion for revelry, and the crowd of servants, who had been intoxicated since midday, now rushed at the food and the wine. The servants raised to their lips flasks of vodka, expensive liquor, and Hungarian wine; others, more greedy for food, fought over pieces of meat. The snow-white tablecloth was instantly stained with all sorts of beverages. In the tumult chairs were overturned and the candlesticks on the table upset. Ornamented cut-glass goblets fell from their drunken hands to the floor and broke with a crash. Here and there quarrels and fights ensued. Some stole dishes from the table. In a word, an orgy began, the noise of which reached even to the other end of the house.

Attracted by this noise, Martsian Kshepetski, the two Sulgostowskis, the young Labezowski and another guest came out. When they saw what was going on they seized their swords. At the first moment the disturbance increased. The Sulgostowskis contented themselves with striking the drunkards with the flat of their swords, but Martsian Kshepetski was seized with a violent fury. His protruding eyes stood out still more, his teeth flashed from beneath his mustaches, and he began to slash with his sword all that came his way. Some of the servants were covered with blood; others hid under the table; still others sought refuge in disorderly flight; and he kept on slashing with his sword, and shouting:

“Scoundrels! Rascals! I am master here! I am master here!”

He rushed after them into the hallway, where he cried, in a shrill voice:

“Clubs! Rods!”

And those that stood in the center of the hall, as on a

battlefield, looked at each other, sad-eyed, and shook their heads.

"I have never seen such things in all my life," said one of the Sulgostowskis.

And the other said:

"It's a queer death, under queer circumstances. Look at this—it is as though the Tartars had been here."

"Or evil spirits," added Labezhowski. "What a terrible night!"

Nevertheless, they commanded the servants to come out from under the table and bring some order in the room. The servants had sobered up for fear, and they went to work immediately. By this time Martsian returned.

He had calmed down somewhat now, only his lips quivered with anger.

"They will remember this!" he said to those present. "But I thank you for helping me to punish those scoundrels. They will not find it easier now than it was before, when their master was alive. I wager my head on that!"

The Sulgostowskis looked at him, and one of them said:

"You have nothing to thank us for, even as we do not thank you."

"How is that?"

"Why do you consider yourself the sole judge in this matter?" asked one of the twins.

Martsian began to jump up on his short bow-legs, as if he wished to spring to their eyes; and he replied:

"Because the law is on my side! The law is on my side!"

"What law?"

"The law is in my favor, not in yours."

"How is that? Have you read the will?"

"What have I to do with a will?" (At this he blew on the palm of his hand.) "It is wind! To whom has he

willed his estate? To his wife? But where is his wife? There you are! I am here the nearest relative—we, the Kshepetskis—not you! Get out!”

“What do you mean by driving us out? You had better watch your goat-head!”

“You threaten me?”

Here Pan Martsian bared his sword and advanced toward the brothers, but they, too, clasped the handles of their weapons.

But at this moment Father Tvorkowski's grief-laden voice resounded:

“Gentlemen, gentlemen! The dead man is not cold yet.”

The Sulgostowskis became terribly confused, and one of them said:

“Esteemed prelate, we do not need anything, because we have our own bread, and we do not stretch our hands to take that which does not belong to us. But this serpent is already beginning to sting; he is playing the part of master, and orders people away from here.”

“What people? Whom?”

“Whomever he pleases to. To-day he has ordered us away; to-morrow he may order away the orphan-bride living under this roof.”

“That is not true! That is not true!” exclaimed Martisian.

And suddenly, bending himself together, he began to laugh, rubbing his hands; and he said, with a certain venomous kindness:

“On the contrary, on the contrary! I invite everybody to the funeral; I beg most humbly—my father and I beg you humbly; and as for Panna Seninska, she will always find shelter and protection here—always, always!”

He rubbed his hands with great joy as he uttered these words.

## CHAPTER XV.

AND, indeed, Martsian informed Panna Seninska that she might consider Belchonchki as her estate; but he postponed the end of this conversation until after the funeral. First he wished to discuss the matter with his father, who had had so many lawsuits during his lifetime that he was familiar with the law and knew how to evade all sorts of difficulties. Both felt certain that they had a good case, and therefore on the next day after the sad occurrence, just at the moment when Pan Pongowski was placed into the coffin, they shut themselves up in a side room and began to discuss the situation, filled with good hopes.

"Providence is in our favor!" said the old man. "There's no use in talking. Providence is in our favor! And Pan Pongowski will have to answer to Him for the injustice which he intended to do us."

"Let him answer!" said Martsian. "It is our good fortune that he only intended to do it, but did not accomplish it, for we will now take everything into our hands. The Sulgostowskis have already quarreled with me, but I will wring their souls out of them before I let them have even a small piece of land of Belchonchki."

"The cursed scoundrels! But I am not afraid of her, but of the will. Have you asked Father Tvorkowski? If there is anybody that knows of it, it is he."

"It was impossible to ask him last night, for he scolded us when I was quarreling with the Sulgostowskis. 'The

dead man is not cold yet,' he said; then he went for the coffin, for the priests; and to-day there has been no opportunity."

"What if Pan Pongowski has willed everything to that goat of a girl?"

"He had no right to make such a will, for this estate belonged to his deceased wife, our nearest relative."

"The will will be annulled, but there will be expenses, going to tribunals, and God knows what else."

"You are accustomed to lawsuits, and I have a scheme in my mind that will make all lawsuits altogether unnecessary. Meanwhile *beatus qui tenet*, and for this reason I shall not leave Belchonchki. I have already sent for our servants. Let the Sulgostowskis or Zabezhowskis drive me out later!"

"But how about her, if it is willed to her?"

"Who will take her part? She is all alone in the world; she has no friends, no relatives—she is an orphan. Who will feel like exposing his neck for her sake, like giving himself up to quarrels, duels and expenses? Who needs her? Tachewski was in love with her, but Tachewski is no more; he may never come back, and even if he does, he is a pauper, and he knows about lawsuits just as much as my horse. To tell the truth, even if it were not Pongowski, but her own father, that left Belchonchki to her, we could come here and manage things as we please, under the pretext of guardianship over the orphan. I think that Pongowski had intended to make a will only in the marriage contract; so that there is either no will at all, or, if there is a will, it is made out in favor of Panna Seninska as his 'charge.'"

"And such a will we can break," said the old man. "I wager my head on that. Though a lawsuit cannot be avoided."

"Why not? I am listening to you, but I think it can be avoided."

"Speaking between us, if the deceased Pani Pongowski (she was a fool! May God rest her soul!) left all to her husband, then he had a right to leave it to anybody he pleased."

Pan Kshepetski uttered the last words almost in a whisper, and looking round on all sides, though he knew that nobody except themselves was in the room.

But the son asked:

"How could she will it to him, when she died suddenly?"

"The will was made out a year after their wedding. Evidently Pongowski wrested from her the will by force, for they lived in perilous places, and no one knew when the Tartars would make an onslaught. He also made out a will to her. There was a time when I was going to sue him, but I saw that I could not succeed. Now it is altogether different."

"Now we shall manage without a lawsuit."

"If we can, all the better; but we must be prepared."

"I shall manage it without you."

The old Pan Kshepetski, on hearing this, felt offended.

"You will manage? You will only spoil the matter. He will manage it! Didn't you advise me not to sue the Silnitskis concerning Druzhkov, because, you said, nothing could be gained by it? Was nothing to be gained? Why not? They had witnesses to swear to the land—what a great thing! I ordered my people to put earth from my yard into their boots—and what was the result? They went to Pan Silnitski's estate, and not one of them swore falsely when they said: 'I swear that the earth on which I stand belongs to Pan Kshepetski.' And you would have thought a whole year and could not devise a scheme like that. You will manage it alone? Just think of it!"

He began to stir his toothless jaws in agitation, as if he were chewing something, and his chin almost reached his nose, which was hooked like the bill of a bird of prey.

"Compose yourself and listen," said the son. "If it is a question of '*lege agere cum aliquo*,' I shall always leave it to you; but as to what concerns the fair sex, my experience is greater, and I have more confidence in myself in such matters."

"What do you mean?"

"If it comes to a case against Panna Seninska, it will not be settled before any tribunal."

"How then?"

"It is not difficult to guess. Has not my time arrived? or can you find a girl like her in this region?"

Saying this, Martsian lifted his head high and gazed into his father's eyes. The old man looked at him, too, with a searching glance, chewed with his gums, and then asked:

"Do you think so?"

"Why not? This thought has been in my mind not since yesterday."

"Why not? Because she is as poor as Lazarus."

"But she will get Belchonchki without any trouble. You remember, Pan Pongowski said that if one were to look through the papers of the Seninskas, half a province could be gotten back by law. Even the Sobieskis are greatly indebted to them, hence there would be royal protection. The King himself should think of a dower for her. And I have long liked that girl—long, long!"

And he jumped up on his short legs, licking his lips, and looked so repulsive that old Kshepetski said:

"She will not want you."

"And she wanted old Pongowski? Eh? Were there not many girls that wanted me? A host of young men have gone to the army, so we may soon be able to buy girls by

the dozen, like horseshoe nails. Old Pongowski knew why he drove me out of the house, and he would not have done it if he had not been afraid for the girl."

"But supposing that she will not want you—what then?"

A fire of malice glistened in Martsian's eyes.

"Then," he answered, with emphasis, "then I can manage it so that the girl, who is without protection, will beg me herself to take her to the altar."

But the old man was frightened by these words.

"What?" he asked. "Do you know that such an act is criminal?"

"But I know that no one would take the girl's part."

"I say to you, take care! As it is, people are against you. Whether you win the lawsuit over the inheritance or you lose it, you will not be disgraced; but this is a criminal act—do you understand?"

"It will not come to that unless she herself wants it. But do not hinder me; only act as I will tell you. Immediately after the funeral you will take Tekla home, and, if you can find some pretext, take, also, the old Pani Vinicka along, and I will remain here by the orphan with Agneshka and Joanna. These reptiles rage at anybody who is prettier and younger than they are. They began yesterday to sting the poor girl—but what will happen when they remain with her under one roof? They will sting her, bite her, reproach her for every crust of bread! I can see all this as though I read it in a book, and this is water for my mill."

"What will you grind with it?"

"What will I grind? When there will be trouble among them, I will insult those reptiles, slap their faces, if necessary; and I will kiss the orphan's hands and knees, saying: 'I am your defender, your brother—I am your true friend, and you are the real mistress.' And do you think that her

heart will not soften, that she will not fall in love with him who will shield her and guard her, who will wipe her tears away, who will watch over her day and night? And if, in her despair and excitement, she will come to some extraordinary confidence, so much the better! So much the better! So much the better!"

Here Martsian began to rub his hands, and looked at his father with his goat-like eyes so strangely that the old man had to spit in disgust.

"Tfu! You pagan! There is always one and the same thing in your mind."

"Chills shoot through my frame when I look at her. It was not for nothing that Pongowski had driven me out from this house."

A minute of silence followed.

"Then you will tell Joanna and Agneshka to act according to your instructions?"

"There is no need of giving them any instructions—their nature is quite sufficient. Tekla alone is a dove, while the others are vicious crows."

And, indeed, Pan Martsian had not deceived himself, for his sisters, each in her own way, began to nag at Panna Seninska. Tekla clasped her in her arms and wept together with her, and Joanna and Agneshka also consoled her, but in another manner.

"That which can't be helped can't be helped," said the elder sister; "but compose yourself. You will not be our aunt, because God has not willed it; but nobody will do you any harm here—nobody will grudge you a crust of bread."

"And nobody will compel you to work," went on the other sister; "we know that you are not used to it. When you have recovered, and will want it yourself, then it is another matter. In any case, don't be in a hurry—wait until your grief subsides; for, indeed, a terrible misfortune

has befallen you. You were to become an important lady, you were to have a husband; and now you have nobody, except us. But, believe us, though we are not relatives, we will treat you as relatives."

Then Joanna started again:

"Be reconciled to the will of God. God has punished you, but therefore He will pardon many of your sins. You trusted too much in your beauty, you were too eager for wealth and rich clothes (but, then, we are all sinners in this respect; therefore I only say this); but this will atone for the other sins."

"Amen!" concluded Agneshka. "Give some valuable thing to the church for the repose of his soul, because you have no need any longer of your dower, and we will ask father to allow you to do this."

They looked with sharp eyes at the dresses which lay on the table, and at the trunks containing her trousseau. They were so curious to see everything that Joanna could no longer restrain herself; and she said:

"Perhaps you want us to help you find something?"

And they rushed to the trunks in which Anusya's robes lay still unpacked. And Panna Seninska sat, leaning on Tekla, not knowing what was going on about her.

## CHAPTER XVI.

As a bride, Panna Seninska felt as if something in her life had grown dark; as if something had been extinguished; as if something had been broken off; as if a heavy door had been closed before her; and her betrothal had roused no joy in her heart. She had given her consent merely because it had been Pongowski's will; she had felt bound to do it out of gratitude to her guardian, and still more because after Yatzek's departure her heart was filled with bitterness and grief, and with the painful thought that, save her guardian, she had no one in the world, and that were it not for him she would be like an orphan lost amidst strangers and enemies. But a thunderbolt had suddenly struck the hearth at which she was to sit down, content with any kind of peace, and the only man in the whole world in whom she took an interest was no more. And small wonder that this thunderbolt had stunned her at the first moment, and that all her thoughts had become confused in her head; and in her heart was congealed a feeling of sorrow for the only soul near to her—a feeling mingled with amazement and terror.

Therefore the words of the elder Kshepetski sisters, who had started to rob her trousseau, were to her sounds without meaning. Then Martsian came, bowed, rubbed his hands, jumped, and spoke for a long time; but she understood him as little as she understood all the other guests, who, according to custom, approached

her with words which expressed all the more sympathy the less sincere they were. And only when Pan Ciprianowicz laid his hand on her head in fatherly manner and said, "May God protect you, orphan," something stirred in her heart and tears rushed to her eyes. Now, for the first time in her life, it occurred to her that she was as a helpless leaf tossed by the wind.

In the meantime began the ceremonies, which, in accordance with custom, lasted for ten days, since Pongowski had been a man of importance in the vicinity. During the first few days the general attention was directed to Panna Seninska; but later, when people noticed that the Kshepetskis had taken complete possession of the house, and that they alone appeared as the masters, they ceased to regard the young lady, and at the end of the ceremonies they treated her as an ordinary housekeeper.

Only Pan Ciprianowicz, moved by her tears and by her sad plight, thought of her. The servants were whispering that the old maids had carried off her trousseau and that the old Kshepetski had hidden her jewels in his box. And everybody began to deal roughly with the young lady. When these reports reached Pan Serafin his kind heart was touched, and he resolved to talk the matter over with Father Voinowski.

But Father Voinowski was so prejudiced against Panna Seninska because of Tachewski that he said at the very beginning of the conversation:

"I feel sorry for the poor girl in her misfortune, and I shall do all I can to help her; but—speaking between ourselves—God has punished her for Yatzek; that seems certain."

"But Yatzek is away, even as my Stanislav is away, and she remains here alone, an orphan."

"Yatzek went away—but how? You saw him before he

left, but I went with him farther, and I can tell you that the young fellow had his teeth set firmly; but his heart was bleeding so that he could not utter a word. Oh, how he loved that girl! Only people of former generations could love like that! The people of to-day can't love in such a manner."

"But he was able to move his hands. I have heard that he had a quarrel just beyond Radom, and that he slashed more than one or two passing nobles."

"Yes; that is because he has a girl's face, and every ruffian thinks he can easily get rid of him. Some drunken fellows picked a quarrel with him—what was he to do? I'll lecture him for that—I will. But you must remember that a man with a bleeding heart is just like '*leo, quaelens quem devoret.*'"

"True, true; but as for the girl—eh, esteemed Father, only God knows whether she is really as much to blame as you imagine."

"*Mulier est insidiosa.*"

"*Insidiosa*, or not; but when I heard that Pongowski wanted to marry her it occurred to me at once that perhaps he was the root of all the evil, for he must have considered it absolutely essential to get him out of the way once for all."

But the priest shook his head:

"No. We recognized by his letter that it was written at her instigation. I remember it well, and I could repeat it to you word by word."

"I remember it, too; but we could not know what Pongowski had told her and how he described Yatzek's deeds to her. For instance, the Bukoyemskis confessed to me that when they met her with Pongowski on the road to Pshitik they purposely told her that Yatzek went away, after a great spree, laughing, cheerful, and unusually interested in

the daughter of Pan Sbershkhovski, to whom you had given him a letter of recommendation."

"But how they lied! Why did they do it?"

"To show the girl and Pongowski that Yatzek had dropped them out of his mind altogether. But note this: if the Bukoyemskis said this out of friendship for Yatzek, what must have Pongowski said out of hatred for him?"

"I am sure he did not spare him. But even if she is not so much to blame as we had imagined, what of it? Yatzek is gone, and he may never, perhaps, return. As far as I know him, he will spare his life even less than Pongowski had spared his reputation."

"Tachewski would have gone in any case," replied Pan Ciprianowicz.

"And if he does not come back I will not tear my coat on me. To die for the country, in a war against Mohammedan baseness, is an end worthy of a knight, and a worthy end for a noble family. But I should have preferred to see him depart without that painful wound in his heart."

"Neither has my son known personal happiness in his life; he also went, and, it may be also, never to return to me," replied Pan Ciprianowicz.

And both were lost in meditation, for both of them loved the young men with all their hearts.

As they were thus absorbed in thought Tvorkowski, the prelate, came in, and, on learning that they had been discussing Panna Seninska's future, he said:

"Gentlemen, I will tell you (but let this be a secret) that Pan Pongowski has left no will, and that the Kshepetskis had a right to take possession of the estate. I know that he wished to will everything to his wife in the marriage contract, but he died before the will had been executed. Don't mention this before the Kshepetskis."

"But you have not said anything to them, have you?"

"Why should I? They are cruel people, and I wanted it that they should not be too cruel toward her; and I have not only withheld the information, but have told them: 'Not only does God sometimes test a man, but one man sometimes to test another.' When they heard this they were greatly alarmed, and they started to inquire: 'What does it mean? Do you know anything?' Then I told them: 'That which is to come out will come out. Remember one thing: Pan Pongowski had a right to will his estate to whomever he pleased.'"

The prelate began to laugh, and, putting his hands under his violet girdle, continued:

"When old Kshepetski heard this his legs began to tremble and he began to argue. 'No,' he said, 'it's impossible; he had no right whatever! Neither God nor men would agree to that!' And I looked at him sternly and said:

" 'You do well by mentioning the name of God, for at your age it is necessary to think of His mercy; but do not turn to the earthly tribunals, for it may be that you will not live to hear the decision.' He was frightened; while I added: 'And be kind to the orphan, that God may not punish you sooner than you imagine!' "

Father Voinowski, whose compassionate heart was moved at the fate of the girl, clasped the prelate in his embrace.

"Benefactor!" he exclaimed, "with such a mind as yours is, you should have been a chancellor! I understand! I understand! You have not said anything; you have not parted with the truth, and you have frightened the Kshepetskis. They are now under the impression that there is a will, that it is even in your hands, and therefore they must treat the girl better."

The prelate, pleased with the praise, touched his head with his finger and said:

"Not quite like a nut with holes in it?"

"There is so much wisdom in it that there is no room for more."

"Yes; all will be well, if it pleases God, but I think that I have really saved the orphan from abuse. On the other hand, I must admit that the Kshepetskis, against my expectations, spoke of Panna Seninska with kindness and humanity. The old maids had stolen some things belonging to her, but the old man said that he would compel them to return them to the young lady."

"Even if the Kshepetskis were the worst people in the world, they would not dare to be unjust to an orphan who is under the vigilant surveillance of so wise and kind a spiritual counselor as you are. But, most revered benefactor, I wish to ask you about another matter: do me the honor to come to me in Yedlinka. Permit me to welcome under my roof such a notable personage, whose words are the honey of politeness and wisdom. Father Voinowski has already accepted my invitation; so now we could, all three of us, discuss *du publicis et privatis*."

"I know what your hospitality is, and to decline it would cause me great vexation; and since Lent, the time of self-subjection, is over, I will gladly go to you for a day," replied the prelate, affably. "Let us bid the Kshepetskis farewell; but first we must go in to see the orphan, so that they shall know how highly we respect her."

They went, and, finding her alone, they began to speak to her kind, sincere words, thus giving her hope and courage. Pan Ciprianowicz stroked her on her fair hair, as a mother would do in order to soothe her sorrowing child. The prelate Tvorkowski did the same, and the kind-hearted Father Voinowski was so touched by her emaciated face and its sad expression (which reminded him of a flower of the field cut down by the scythe before its time) that he

even embraced her; and, as he was thinking of Yatzek all the time, he said, half to her, half to himself:

“How could one wonder at Yatzek, since this picture was before him? The Bukoyemskis lied when they said that he was cheerful before leaving—oh, how they lied!”

On hearing this she suddenly pressed her lips to his hand, and she could not tear them away for a long time. Her bosom was shaken with sobs, and she was still weeping bitterly when they left her.

An hour later they were already in Yedlinka, where good news was awaiting them. A man came with a letter from Stanislav. Young Ciprianowicz reported that both Yatzek and he had joined the hussars of Prince Alexander, that they were well, and that Yatzek, though still sad, had regained some cheerfulness and was no longer quite as pensive as during the first few days. Then, besides the words of filial love, there was in the letter a postscript which astonished the old man. “If you,” wrote Stanislav, “should see the Bukoyemskis on their way back, be not astonished, and treat them with kindness, for a strange accident has happened to them. We cannot help them in any way; if they will have no opportunity to go to war, they will die of sorrow, which even now has almost killed them.”

During the following months Pan Serafin visited Belchonchki, desiring to learn how Panna Seninska was. This was not through any personal motive, for his son, Stanislav, was not in love with the girl, and everything had been broken between her and Yatzek. Still, he came to see her chiefly out of kindness, and partly, also, out of curiosity, for he wished to find out to what extent the girl was to blame for the rupture in the relations between her and Yatzek.

But he did not succeed so easily. True, the Kshepetskis respected him for his great wealth and received him

gladly; but it was a strange hospitality, so continuously watchful that he could never find himself alone with the girl.

He understood that the Kshepetskis did not wish him to ask her any questions as to how she was being treated, and this set him thinking, though he did not notice that she was ill-treated or compelled to work too hard. True, twice he had found her cleaning with a crust of bread white satins of such size that they could not have been her own, and he found her darning stockings in the evening; but the Kshepetski girls were doing the same, hence this was not intended to humiliate the orphan by making her do degrading work. The old maids were occasionally quarrelsome, and stinging as nettles; but Pan Serafin soon realized that such was their nature, and that they could not restrain themselves from the pleasure of gnawing even their brother, whom they feared to such an extent that a single look of his was enough to make them draw back their stings directly. Martsian himself was polite and kind to Panna Seninska, though without obtrusion, and after the departure of old Kshepetski he became still more agreeable.

This departure was not to Pan Ciprianowicz's liking, although it was plain enough that the feeble old man could not be left without the care of a woman; and, since they had two houses, the Kshepetski family had to be divided. Of course, Pan Serafin would have preferred that Tekla remain with the orphan; but when he hinted vaguely at the difference in the ages of the girls, his words were met in the most unfriendly manner by the old maids.

"Panna Seninska has shown to everybody that age makes no difference to her. Our late uncle and Pani Vinicka prove this, so we are not so very old for her," said Joanna.

"We are as much older than she as Tekla is younger, and I am not quite sure about that, either," added the other

sister. "Besides, the responsibility for this household rests on our shoulders."

But Martsian interposed, saying:

"Father is better pleased with Tekla's services, for he loves her best of all, which is quite natural. We thought of sending Panna Seninska together with them; but she is used to this house, and I think she feels better here. And as for our care, I am doing all in my power to see to it that she does not work too hard."

Saying this, he advanced to the young girl and was about to kiss her hand; but Panna Seninska withdrew quickly, frightened. Pan Serafin thought that they should not have taken Pani Vinicka away from the house, but he refrained from making this remark, not desiring to interfere with other people's affairs.

More than once he noticed sadness mingled with terror on Panna Seninska's face; but he was not surprised at this, for the girl's lot was, indeed, a painful one. An orphan, without a single kindred soul, without her own roof overhead, compelled to live on the favor of people whom she disliked, and who were known for their wickedness throughout the neighborhood, she was forced to grieve there for the bright past and shudder before the future. Besides, no matter how a person may be suffering, there is the hope for a better future that brings solace; but she had nothing to hope for, nothing to wait for. To-morrow must be the same as to-day; her life a row of monotonous years of orphanhood, solitude; her bread the bread of charity.

Pan Serafin often discussed this with Father Voinowski, whom he saw now almost daily, for both of them were glad to talk about their young people. But Father Voinowski merely shrugged his shoulders with compassion, forever praising the wisdom of the prelate Tvorkowski in hanging the threat of the will like a Damoclean sword over the heads

of the Kshepetskis, thus protecting the orphan at least from very bad treatment.

"What a clever man!" he said. "Sometimes I think that he has not even told us the whole truth, that the will is really in his hands, and that he will bring it out unexpectedly."

"That has occurred to me, too; but why would he hide this?"

"I don't know—perhaps to test human nature. I know one thing: Pongowski was a cautious man, and I can hardly believe that he should have made no provision of any kind long ago."

Soon the attention of the two old men was turned into another direction, for the Bukoyemskis came in, having walked all the way from Radom. They arrived at Yedlinka one evening—with swords, it is true, but with tattered coats and torn boots; their faces were so careworn that if Serafin had not been expecting them he would have been frightened terribly and would have thought that they were bringing him news of his son's death.

The Bukoyemskis in turn began to embrace his knees, kiss his hands; and he, looking at their wretchedness, struck himself on his thighs and exclaimed:

"Stanislav wrote me that something ill has befallen you, but this is terrible!"

"We have sinned, benefactor!" replied Marek, striking himself on the chest.

Following his example, the others repeated his words:

"We have sinned!" "We have sinned!" "We have sinned!"

"But tell me how! What has happened? How is Stanislav? He wrote me that he saved you. What has happened?"

"Stanislav is well, and both he and Tachewski are shining like two suns."

"Well, thank God! Thank God! Thank you for the good news. Have you no letters?"

"He wrote, but did not give us the letter. It may be lost."

"Are you hungry? How terrible you look! You really look as though you have risen from the grave!"

"We are not hungry, for we are received well by every noble; but we are unfortunate."

"Sit down. You will drink some warm wine, and while it is being warmed up tell me what has happened to you. Where have you been?"

"In Warsaw," replied Matvey. "It's a nasty town."

"How is that?"

"The town is crowded with scoundrels and drunkards, and on Długa Street, as well as in the Old Square, there is a dram-shop at every step."

"Well, what of it?"

"Well, one of these scoundrels persuaded Lukash to play dice with him. May the pagans put the scoundrel on the rack first!"

"He won?"

"He won all that Lukash had in his pocket, and later, also, all that we had. We became desperate and wanted to win back; but he won also a horse, together with the saddle and with our pistols. I swear to you, esteemed Pan Ciprianowicz, I thought that Lukash would stab him with his knife. Well, what was to be done? We had to comfort our brother; so we sold another horse, that Lukash should not feel ashamed to travel on foot alone."

"I understand what happened."

"And when we sobered up we suffered anew, because two

of our horses were gone. So we had to comfort ourselves again——”

“You have comforted yourselves in this fashion till the fourth horse was gone?”

“Yes. We have sinned! We have sinned!” repeated the grief-stricken brothers.

“Well, was that at least the end?”

“Oh, no! We came upon this scoundrel once more, and he scoffed at us. ‘That’s the way fools are fleeced,’ he said; ‘but, as you are strong fellows, I will take you as my serving-men, for I am joining a regiment.’ Lukash began to cry for being ridiculed in this manner; then he drew his sword and struck the scoundrel across the face. He fell. His friends came to his aid; we rushed in to help Lukash and a battle started. Suddenly the marshal’s guard appeared and went right at us. Then the others began to shout: ‘Gentlemen, here they trample upon liberty and offend the republic in our persons! Let us make peace!’ That is how it happened. God soon blessed us, and in an instant we wounded eight men—three of them mortally—and the others—some five of them—fled.”

Pan Ciprianowicz clasped his head, while Marek went on:

“Yes. Now we know. God saw our innocence; but when people shouted that the fight was near the King’s palace, that it was a crime punishable with death, we were frightened and we took to our heels. They tried to catch us, but we recalled our younger days, gave our pursuers a good thrashing, and thus we saved ourselves. Stanislaw gave us his servants’ horses, and our heads were saved with great difficulty even then, for we were pursued up to Senkotsin; and if the horses had been bad our case would have ended there and then. Fortunately none of them knows our names, so they cannot sue us.”

A minute of silence ensued; then Pan Serafin asked:

“And where are Stanislav’s horses?”

“We have sinned, benefactor; we have sinned!”

Ciprianowicz began to pace the room with big strides.

“Now I understand,” he said, “why you have brought me no letters from Stanislav. He wrote me that various misfortunes had befallen you, and he predicted your return to Yedlinka in need of money for horses and outfits; but he could not predict how the whole matter would turn out.”

“That’s true, benefactor!” replied Yan.

By this time heated wine was brought in, and the brothers turned to it very eagerly, for they were fatigued from the journey.

They felt uneasy, because the host maintained silence as he paced the room, his face stern and morose. And Marek spoke again:

“Esteemed Pan Ciprianowicz, you ask about Stanislav’s horses. Two of them broke down before we had reached Groits, for we galloped all the time in a terrible storm. We sold them for a trifle to Jewish drivers, as they were of no use any longer. Besides, we had not a coin to our souls, for Stanislav had had no time to give us some money for the road. Then, strengthened somewhat by what we had, we went ahead, two men on a horse. You understand what that means! Some noble would appear on the road, and immediately he would seize his sides, laughing. ‘What sort of Jerusalem nobles are these?’ he would ask. And we were so embittered by our unendurable misery that we were ready for anything. At Byalobzhegi we sold our last two horses, and to those that were surprised to see us travel on foot we said that we were doing it to fulfill a vow of honor. Benefactor, forgive us, like a father, for there are no more unfortunate people in the world than we are.”

The youngest, Yan, moved by the recollection of past

sufferings, and warmed up by the wine, raised his hands and exclaimed:

"We are orphans of God! What is there still left us in the world?"

"Nothing but brotherly love," replied Marek.

And they began to embrace one another, shedding bitter tears as they did so; then they all rushed over to Pan Serafin.

"Father," they said, "our protector, don't be angry at us. Make us one more loan for outfits; we will return it to you, with the help of God. If you will not lend it to us, it is also well; only do not be angry—only forgive us! Forgive us at least in the name of the great love which we cherish for your Stanislav; for I tell you the truth: let any man dare cast an evil glance at him and we will tear that man to pieces with our swords. Isn't that so, dear brothers? With our swords!"

"Give him to us, the scoundrel!" exclaimed Matvey, Lukash and Yan in unison.

Pan Ciprianowicz paused before them, put his hand on his forehead, and said:

"I am angry, it is true, but I am more sad than angry. When I think that there are many like you in the republic my heart contracts with pain, and I ask myself: 'Will our mother, having such children, be able to withstand the storms which threaten her?' You ask my forgiveness, you beg my pardon. But I swear to you by the living God, it is not a question here of me, or of my horses, but of something a hundredfold more important—it is a question of the public welfare and of the future of the republic. And you do not understand this—you do not even think of this; and there are thousands like you, which makes the sorrow all the more painful, the anxiety all the keener, the de-

spair graver, in me as well as in any worthy citizen of this country."

"For God's sake, benefactor, how have we sinned against our fatherland?"

"How? By lawlessness, licentiousness, wantonness and drunkenness. Oh! our people regard such matters lightly; they don't see how the pest is spreading; they don't see how the walls of the once majestic structure are being cracked and how the ceiling is threatening to fall on our heads. Here we are on the eve of war; no one knows whether the pagans will not attack us with all their forces; and you—Christian warriors—what are you doing? The trumpets summon you to the battlefield, and your heads are filled with nothing but wine and licentiousness. With a light heart you stab the guardians of the law, which assures order of some kind. Who has made those laws? The nobles! And who tramples them? The nobles! How will this country come out on the field of glory, this advance post of Christendom, since it is inhabited not by warriors, but by drunkards; not by citizens, but by licentious rioters?"

Here Pan Serafin fell silent, and, pressing his temples with his hands, again began to pace the room with long strides; and the brothers exchanged glances in amazement and confusion, for they had not expected to hear from him such words.

But he heaved a deep sigh, and continued:

"You have been called out to shed pagan blood, and, instead, you have shed Christian blood; you have been called upon to defend the country, and yet you came out as her enemies—for it is self-evident that the greater the disorder in a fortress, the weaker is the fortress. Fortunately there are still worthy sons of the mother, but there are many legions of such people as you are, and, instead of freedom,

riot is flourishing; instead of discipline, there is disobedience; the treasury is plundered, diets are broken up; there is no patriotism, but self-love and disorder everywhere—from high to low there is lawlessness everywhere; and this makes my heart bleed, this makes me fear defeat and God's anger——”

“For heaven's sake! must we hang ourselves?” exclaimed Lukash.

Pan Ciprianowicz was again pacing up and down the room, and continued to speak, addressing himself rather than the Bukoyemskis:

“Throughout this republic there is one great feast, and an unknown hand is already writing on the wall: ‘*Mane—Tekel—Fares!*’ Meanwhile, wine is flowing; later, blood and tears will flow. I am not the only one to see this; I am not the only one to predict it; but it is vain to put a candle before the eyes of the blind, or to sing songs before the deaf.”

Silence followed. The brothers exchanged glances all the while; then they looked at Pan Serafin with growing confusion. Finally Lukash whispered:

“May I be hanged if I understand anything!”

“May I be hanged——”

“May I be hanged——”

“If we drank a couple of times——”

“Keep quiet; don't mention it.”

“Let's go home.”

“Come.”

“We bow to you, Pan Ciprianowicz,” said Marek, coming forward and bowing to Pan Serafin's knees.

“Whither?”

“To Lesnichowka. God will help us——”

“So will I help you,” replied Pan Ciprianowicz. “Only so many painful feelings have weighed upon my heart that

I felt like unburdening myself. Go upstairs, gentlemen, and rest yourself, and then you will learn of my decision."

An hour later he ordered to harness horses and started off to Father Voinowski.

The priest was no less grieved by the conduct of the Bukoyemskis, but at times he could not restrain himself from bursting into laughter; for, having served many years in the army, he had had many experiences, and he now recalled them. One thing he could not forgive the Bukoyemskis—that is, that they drank away their horses.

"A soldier often runs riot," he said, "but this is too much. To sell the horse is treason to the service. I will tell the Bukoyemskis that I would have been glad if the martial law had taken their heads off their shoulders—that would certainly have been a good lesson to other rioters; but I confess to you that I should have felt very sorry, for all the four brothers are fine fellows. I know something about men, and I can tell in advance what a man is good for. As for the Bukoyemskis, the pagans that will attack them breast to breast will fare ill. And what do you intend to do with them?"

"Of course, I will not leave them without help, but I am afraid that if I send them off alone the same thing might happen to them."

"True!" said the priest.

"It has occurred to me to go together with them and turn them over straight to the captain of the regiment. Under the banners and the influence of discipline they will not allow themselves too much."

"A splendid idea! Take them to Cracow, for the regiments will assemble there. Perhaps I will also be able to get away with you, for we may be able to meet our boys there, and it will be livelier for us to come home."

Pan Ciprianowicz smiled at this, and said:

"You will return alone."

"How is that?"

"I will join the regiment myself."

"You wish to enter the army?" asked Father Voinowski, in amazement.

"Yes and no; for it is one thing to enter the service and choose it as a profession, and quite another to go on a single expedition. True, I am already old, but older men than I have entered the ranks at the sound of the trumpet. It is also true that I have sent my only son, but one cannot sacrifice enough for his country. Thus did my forefathers think, and our mother republic has rewarded them with the greatest honors at her disposal. And now I am ready to sacrifice for her my last copper coin, my last drop of blood. And if I should have to die on the battlefield—just think of it, esteemed Father!—what death is nobler, what happiness greater? Since we die but once, is it not a greater pleasure to die on the field of glory, beside my son, than to die in bed; to die from a sword or a bullet, than from some sickness—and, in addition, defending the faith and the country against the pagans?"

Pan Ciprianowicz was so moved by his own words that he outspread his hands and repeated:

"God grant this! God grant this!"

And Father Voinowski clasped him in his embrace and said:

"May God grant that the republic have more citizens like you. There are not many so worthy as you, but surely there is none worthier. It is true that it is more becoming a noble to die on the battlefield than at home, on his bed, and thus did everybody think in former days; but now worse times have come. The country and the faith are one great altar, and man is a bit of myrrh predestined to be

consumed for the glory of this altar. Yes, yes; bad times have set in. Then war is nothing new to you?"

Pan Serafin passed his hand over his breast.

"I have more than one scar here from swords and bullets."

"I would also be better pleased to go with the regiments than to listen here to the old women's sins. Some of them come and tell such nonsense, just as though they had come to shake out fleas at confession. When a peasant commits a sin, he has at least something to repent, and this is still more true of a soldier. Before I took this robe of a priest I was chaplain in the regiment of Pan Modlishewski. I recall this with pleasure. Between one absolution and another I often had to take up the gun or draw the sword. Yes; there is at present a great need for chaplains, and I feel like enlisting; but my parish is large, I am overcrowded with work, my vicar is not very energetic; but worst of all is an old wound from a bullet, which would not allow me to stay more than an hour in the saddle."

"I should be happy to have such a comrade," replied Pan Serafin; "but I understand that even without that wound you could not leave your parish."

"Well, I'll see about that. This is the second day I have been out on horseback; I want to see how long I can stay in the saddle. Perhaps I shall manage the matter somehow. But who will take care of your household?"

"I have a forester, a plain man, but perfectly honest—almost a saint."

"I know. That's the man who is followed by the beasts of the forest. People say that he is a wizard, but you know better. But isn't he old and sickly?"

"I intend to take, also, Vilchopolski, who was before in the employ of Pongowski. Perhaps you remember him? A young noble, who lost one leg, but a strong, courageous

man. The Kshepetskis have sent him away because he would not stoop before them. He was at my house two days ago, offering his services, and to-day I shall surely settle with him. Pongowski was not particularly fond of him, because the young fellow allowed no one to treat him roughly, but Pongowski praised him for his faithfulness and activity."

"Is there any news at Belchonchki?"

"I have not been there for a long time. Vilchopolski does not approve of the Kshepetskis, but I had no time to find out the details."

"I will go over there to-morrow, although they do not receive me there very willingly, and then I will come to have a talk with the Bukoyemskis. I will make them come to confession, and will have them whipped. Let them give one another fifty lashes—that will do them good."

"Of course, it will do them good. Now I must bid you farewell, for I have to meet Vilchopolski."

Pan Ciprianowicz shortened his belt-strap, so that it would not be in the way when he got into the carriage, and a minute later he was already driving home to Yedlina, thinking on the way of the coming war; and he smiled at the thought that he would ride stirrup to stirrup with his son to fight against the pagans. Passing Belchonchki, he met Vilchopolski, seated in a wagon loaded with trunks and drawn by two horses.

Pan Ciprianowicz asked him to get into his carriage, and said:

"Are you leaving Belchonchki forever?"

Vilchopolski pointed to his trunks, and, wishing to show that he was not an ignorant man, he said:

"Yes, your grace, *omnia mea mecum porto*."

"Was there such a hurry?"

"Not exactly; but I should have to go away from there

anyway. Therefore I accept your conditions and am delighted to enter your service. In case you go away, as you have said to me, I will look after your household and your possessions faithfully."

Pan Serafin was pleased with the answer, and with the energetic, daring face of the young man, and after some meditation he said:

"I do not doubt your faithfulness, for I know that you are a noble; the only thing I fear is your inexperience, your incautiousness. In Yedlina one must sit down to watch it day and night, because it is situated almost in the woods, and in great forests there are usually plenty of robbers, who often attack houses."

"I wish no attack on Yedlina, but I should wish it for myself, so that I could convince you that I have both the courage and alertness."

"To be frank, you look as though you had both," replied Pan Ciprianowicz.

He became silent, but after a minute's pause he said:

"There is another important thing which you must take into consideration. Pan Pongowski is now before God's judgment, and *de mortuis nihil nisi bene*; but everybody knows that he was hard on his people. Father Voinowski had admonished him for that, which led to a difference between them. There the peasants' labor was not spared; the trials were brief and the punishment severe. What is more, there was oppression, and the superintendents had become used to treating their men harshly. I wish to tell you that no such things go on in my household. There should be discipline, but it must be paternal, and I consider excessive severity as a sin against God and the country. Remember it well—the peasant is not cheese-curd, and you must not squeeze him too hard. I do not live by people's tears, and I remember that all are equal before God."

A minute of silence ensued ; then Vilchopolski seized Pan Serafin's hand and raised it to his lips. And the old noble said :

"I see that you understand me."

"I understand your grace," replied the young man ; "and now I will tell you that more than a hundred times I had been on the point of telling Pongowski to his face to look for another manager. I was ready to leave his service, but I could not——"

"How is that? There is plenty of work to be found in the world."

Vilchopolski became confused, and stammered :

"No—it so happened—I could not—and I delayed from day to day, and so I stayed. Besides, there was severity, and there was not."

"How is that?"

"It is true that the people were forced to work hard, and no one could prevent that ; but as to lashing the people, I will say briefly, instead of whips straw ropes were used."

"Who was so merciful—you?"

"No. I only preferred to carry out the angel's orders rather than the devil's."

"I understand ; but who was that angel?"

"Panna Seninska."

"Ah ! So that's the kind of girl she is !"

"Exactly ; an angel ! She, too, was afraid of Pongowski, who began to pay attention to her words only toward the end. But she was loved there so much that the people preferred to expose themselves to the old man's anger rather than refuse her request."

"May God bless her for that ! So, you conspired with her against Pongowski?"

"Yes, your grace."

"And that was not discovered?"

"It was discovered once, but I shielded the young lady. The old man whipped me himself; and I told him that if he did not place me on a rug and did not do the whipping himself, I, a noble, would set fire to his house and would shoot the master. And I would have kept my word, even though I had to join the bandits of the forest."

"I like you for that," declared Pan Serafin. And Vilchopolski continued:

"Sometimes it was hard for me to get along with Pan Pongowski; but there was a cherub in the house, therefore I remained, though I had long wished to leave. Later, when the young lady grew up, the old man began to pay more attention to her, and toward the end he yielded to her in every way. Sometimes he found out that she had given grain to some poor people, or, as I have said, that she had substituted straw ropes for whips, and yet he pretended not to notice it. Finally he was so much ashamed that there was no longer any need for her to do these things secretly. She was a true protector of the people. May God bless her, as you have said, and at the same time may He also save her."

"Why do you say 'save' her?" inquired Pan Ciprianowicz.

"Because it is worse for her now than it ever was."

"My God! what do you mean?"

"The old maids torture her, and young Kshepetski makes believe that he defends her; but I know the reason why he does it. But he should rather be careful, for some one may shoot him down like a dog."

Night had long set in by this time; but it was a light night, for the full moon was out, and Pan Ciprianowicz noticed that the eyes of the young manager were flashing like those of a wolf.

“What do you know about that?” he asked, with curiosity.

“I know that he removed me not only because I was independent, but because I watched carefully and listened to what people were saying in the house. I left because I had to leave. But Belchonchki is not very far from here, and in case of need——”

He fell silent, and on the road was heard the rustle of the pines as they were tossed by the night wind.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE situation of Panna Seninska at Belchonchki was growing worse and worse daily. A long time had passed since Pan Pongowski had noticed that Martsian Kshepetski was gazing at the girl with too much of a "goat's look" and had driven him from the house. Later, Martsian saw her at the houses of neighbors, and sometimes at church, and always her beauty of springtime roused fresh desires in him. Now, when they lived under the same roof, when he saw her daily, he began to love her in his own way—that is, with beastlike desire. A change had taken place in his intentions. His first intent had been to bring the girl to shame, and then marry her only in case a will should be found in her favor. Now he was ready to go with her to the altar, if he could in any case have and possess her forever. Reason, which, when urged by desire, becomes its obedient assistant, told him, moreover, that a young lady bearing the name of Seninska was, although dowerless, a match of great moment. But even if reason had told him the opposite, Martsian would not have listened, for as each day appeared he lost some part of his self-mastery. He burnt, he raged; and if, up to that time, he had restrained himself from violence, it was only because desire, even the most urgent, craves and yearns for a willing surrender, and is charmed with the thought of mutuality, in which it sees the highest pleasure, and deceives itself even when there is no cause whatever for doing so. Thus Kshepetski deceived himself, and pictured to himself that blissful mo-

ment in which the young lady would throw herself into his embrace of her own accord.

But, risking all, he felt that he might lose all; and when he asked himself what would happen then, he was seized with terror; for laws of the republic guarding the honor of women were merciless, and around him were sabres of nobles by the hundred, which would flash above his head most unfailingly. But he felt, also, that the hour might come in which he would care for nothing, since in his insolent, wild spirit there was hidden a craving for battle and a hunger for peril; so not without a certain charm for him was the picture of a great throng of nobles besieging Belchoncki, the flame of conflagration above him, and an executioner, dressed in red, standing, axe in hand, somewhere off in the mist in some distant city.

And this desire, fear, and also a longing for battle tossed him from side to side, like three whirlwinds. At the same time, wishing to give exit to that storm and to cool that flood which was seething in his person as water in a caldron, he grew mad, wallowed in riot throughout village inns, rode down his horses, fell upon people, and drank to kill in every dram-shop of Radom, Pshitik and Yedlina. He collected around him a company of road-blockers, who did not go to the war because of evil fame or of poverty. He paid these men and tyrannized over them; he did this, thinking that such a mob might be useful in the future, but he did not admit any man of them to confidence, and never mentioned in their presence the name of the young lady. Once, when a certain Bish, from Bishov, of unknown situation, mentioned her in rude, obscene fashion, Martsian slashed the fellow across the face and drew blood from him.

Martsian galloped home at daybreak at breakneck speed. But that mad riding sobered him thoroughly. Then, without undressing, he threw himself down on the horse-skin

which covered the bed, and slept like a stone for some hours on it; when he rose he put on his best garments, went then to the women, and strove to please the young lady, at whom he gazed all the time. His passion was roused all the more while he surveyed her with his eyes. And more than once, when he was alone with her, his lips were outstretched, his monstrously long arms quivered as though to resist his desire to embrace her; his voice became stifled, his words became insolent, vague and double-meaning; through them circled both flattery and an ill-restrained threatening.

But the consciousness of her misfortune, the deep sorrow and grief developed in Panna Seninska such a dignity as she had never had before, and she overawed Kshepetski by her bearing.

Once she had been a care-free maiden all day long. Now she had learned to be silent, and her eyes had a resolute expression. So, though her heart trembled often from fear of Kshepetski, she restrained him by her calm glance and her silence; then he drew back as if fearing to offend some majesty. It is true that she seemed to him still more desirable, but also less accessible.

She was, however, convinced that immense danger was threatening her, and she tried to avoid him, to be alone with him as little as possible, to turn away conversation from things which might lead to a declaration of love. Finally she had the boldness sometimes to indicate that she was not by any means abandoned and left to the will of fortune, as it seemed to him.

She nevertheless avoided mentioning Yatzek Tachewski, understanding that, after what had passed between them, he could not be then and would never be a defense to her. Besides, she felt that every word about him would rouse hatred and anger in Martsian. But, having noticed that the Kshepetskis were afraid of the prelate, that they looked as if with secret dread upon him, she let it be understood

frequently that she was under his special protection, which rose from a secret agreement which Pan Pongowski had concluded with him. The prelate, who from time to time visited the Kshepetskis, aided her notably, for he discussed politics with them and quoted subtle phrases in Latin; he reminded Martsian of various things which that young man might interpret as suited him.

But the servants and the whole village loved the young lady. People considered the Kshepetskis as intruders and her as the genuine inheritor. All feared Martsian, except Vilchopolski. But even after the removal of that young noble the invisible care of the people surrounded the girl, and Martsian understood that the fear which he roused had its limit, beyond which for him would begin real danger. He understood, also, that Vilchopolski, whose eyes had a daring expression, would not go far from Belchonchki, and that if the young lady should be in need of defense he would not draw back before anything; hence he confessed to himself that she was not really so deserted by every one as at first he had thought, and as on a time he had told his old father. "Who would take her part? No one!" said he, when the old man commended him to remember the terrible punishment which the laws of the republic threatened for an attempt on a woman's honor.

Now he understood that there were such defenders. That raised one more obstacle, but obstacles and perils were only an incitement to a nature like Martsian's. He deceived himself yet, thinking that would move the young lady and make her love him; but there came moments in which he saw, as clearly as a thing on the palm, that he was quite powerless; and then he raged, as said the comrades of his revels; and had it not been for a certain dull but strong and irresistible foreboding that if he had attacked the girl he should lose her forever, he would long ere that have set free the wild beast within him.

And on such occasions he drank without measure and memory.

Meanwhile relations in Belchonchki had become unendurable, darkened with bitterness and poison. The Kshepetski old maids hated the young girl, not only because she was younger than they and more beautiful, but because people loved her, and because Martsian took her part for every reason, and even for no reason. They flamed up at last implacable hatred toward their brother; but, seeing that Anusya never complained, they tortured her all the more stubbornly. Once Agneshka burnt her with a red-hot shovel, as if by accident. Martsian, hearing of this through the servants, went to ask pardon of the young lady and beg her to seek his protection at all times; but he pushed up to her with such insistence, and fell to kissing her hand with such greed and so disgustingly, that she fled from him, unable to repress her abhorrence. Thereupon he broke into a rage and beat his sister so viciously that for two days she feigned illness.

The two "old maids," as they were called in Belchonchki, did not spare biting words on the young lady, or open inventions and humiliations, taking vengeance in this way for all they were forced to endure from their brother. But, out of hatred for Martsian, they warned her against him, censuring her at the same time for yielding to his wishes, for they saw that with nothing could they wound and offend her so painfully as with this implication. The house became a hell for her and every hour in it a torment.

Hatred toward these people, who themselves hated one another, was poisoning even her heart. She began to think of a cloister; but she kept the thought in her bosom, for she knew that they would not let her enter one, and that by unfettering Martsian's anger she would expose herself to great peril. Alarm and fear of danger dwelt in her continually, and produced the desire of death—a desire

which she had never felt previously. Meanwhile each day added to her cup new drops of bitterness. Once, early in the morning, Agneshka surprised Martsian looking through the keyhole of the orphan's chamber. He withdrew, gritting his teeth and threatening with his fist; but the "heir-ess" called her sister immediately, and the two, finding the girl still undressed, began to torment her, as usual.

"You did know that he was standing there," said the elder, "for the floor squeaks outside the door, and there is a noise when any one goes by; but you must have been glad of his presence."

"Yes! he admired her charms, and she did not hide them," interrupted Joanna. "Have you no fear of God, shameless creature?"

And they spat on her.

Anusya's heart revolted within her, for all measure was passed then.

"Begone!" cried she, pointing to the door.

But her face turned pale as linen and her eyes grew dim; for a moment it seemed to her that she was flying into a bottomless abyss, then she fell into unconsciousness.

When she recovered her face was wet from water which had been poured on her, and her breast was pinched in places. The faces of the old maids, bending over her, showed fear, but after a while they felt reassured when they saw that she was conscious.

"Complain, complain!" said Joanna. "Your friend will defend you."

"And you will thank him in your own way!"

But she set her teeth and said not a word.

But Martsian knew all that happened upstairs, even without the complaint, for some hours later, from the chancery, where he had shut himself in with his sisters, came howls at which the whole household was terrified.

In the afternoon, when old Kshepetski came, the two sis-

ters fell with a scream to his knees, imploring him to remove them from that den of wantonness and torture. But he hated the elder to the same degree that he loved the youngest one; so he not only took no pity on the ill-fated old maids, but he called for the knout and compelled them to stay there.

The only being in that terrible house in whom Joanna and Agneshka might have found compassion, sympathy and even protection was Panna Seninska. But they preferred to torment her and mock her; for, with the exception of Tekla, that was a family in which each member did all in his or her power to poison the life and increase the misfortune of the others. But Panna Seninska was more afraid of Martsian's love than of the hatred of his sisters; and he forced himself more and more toward her, advancing more and more shamelessly, ever more insistent, and gazed at her more and more greedily. It had become clear that he was ceasing to control himself, that passion held him in its full sway, and that he might give way at any moment.

And, indeed, that moment came soon.

Once, after warm weather had set in, Panna Seninska went at daybreak to bathe in the shady brook; but just as she was beginning to undress she noticed Martsian's face on the opposite bank. She rushed away breathlessly; he pursued her, but, trying to jump across the water, he fell into it. He was barely able to climb out, and went home drenched to the very last thread of his clothing. Before dinner he had beaten a number of servants till the blood came; during dinner he said not a word to any person. Only at the end of the meal he said, addressing his sisters:

"Leave me alone with Panna Seninska; I have to talk with her on matters of importance."

The sisters, on hearing this, looked at each other significantly, and the young lady grew pale from agitation; though he had long tried to seize every moment in which

he might be alone with her, he had never let himself ask for such a moment openly. Thus, when his sisters had gone, Martsian rose, looked at one door, then at the other, to convince himself that no one was listening, and then advanced to the girl and said:

"Give me your hand as a sign of consent."

She drew back both hands unconsciously and retreated.

Martsian's wish for calmness was evident, but he sprang forward twice on his bow-legs, for he could never abandon that habit, and said, with a voice full of effort:

"You are unwilling. But to-day I came very near drowning for your sake. I beg your pardon for that fright, but it was not caused by any bad reason. Mad dogs began yesterday to run between Virombki and Belchonchki, and I took a gun to make sure of your safety."

Panna Seninska's knees trembled under her a little; but she said, with good presence of mind, calmly:

"I want no protection of which I should have to feel ashamed!"

"I should like to defend you, not only now, but always—till death; not offending God, but with His holy blessing. Do you understand me?"

A moment of silence followed. Through the open window came the sound of cutting wood, made by an old lame man attached to the kitchen.

"I do not understand," said the girl.

"That's because you have no wish to understand," replied Martsian. "You have long known that I cannot live without you. You are as essential to me as air is for breathing. To me you are dearer and more charming than anything in this world! I cannot live without you; I shall burn up, I shall be lost! If I had not restrained myself I should have grabbed you long ago as a hawk grabs a dove. It grows dry in my throat, without you, as it does without

water. I am all quivering; I cannot live. See, even now——”

He stopped, for his teeth were chattering as if in a fever. Bending together still more, he caught at the arms of the chair with his bony fingers, as if fearing to fall, and panted some time very loudly. Then he continued:

“You are poor—that is nothing! I have enough. I do not need fortune, but you. Do you wish to be the mistress of this house? You were to marry Pongowski; I am not worse than he. But do not say no!—by God! do not say it, for I cannot tell what will happen. You are charming! You are mine!”

Saying this, he knelt quickly, clasped her knees and pressed them toward his bosom.

But, beyond even her own expectations, her fear vanished in that terrible moment. The knightly blood began to act in her; readiness for battle to the last breath was roused in the woman. With all her force she began to push away his sweat-covered forehead, which was pressed against her knees at that moment.

“No! no! I would rather die a thousand deaths!”

“No!”

Then he rose, pale-faced, his hair disheveled; he quivered with cold rage. His mustaches stirred, and through them his teeth were seen; but still he controlled himself, still presence of mind did not desert him entirely. But when the girl advanced toward the door he blocked her way.

“Is this true?” he asked, in a hoarse voice. “You will not have me? Repeat that once more to me, to my eyes! Will you not have me?”

“I will not! And do not threaten, for I am not afraid.”

“I do not threaten you, but I want to marry you. I beg you once more, bethink yourself! By God, bethink yourself!”

“In what am I to bethink myself? I am free, I have

my will, for I am a noble, and I say before your eyes, never!"

He came so near to her that his face almost touched hers, and he continued:

"Then, perhaps, instead of being mistress, you will choose to carry wood to the kitchen? Or do you not wish it? How will it be, O noble lady? To which of your estates will you go from here? And, if you stay, whose bread will you eat here—on whose kindness will you live? In whose power will you find yourself? Whose bed, whose chamber is that in which you are sleeping? What will happen if I command to break the locks? And you ask in what you are to bethink yourself? It is your choice—shall it be marriage or no marriage?"

"Scoundrel!" screamed Panna Seninska.

Something unheard of happened at this moment. Seized with sudden fury, Kshepetski bellowed with a voice that was not human, and, seizing the girl by the hair, he began, with a certain wild and beastly pleasure, to beat her without mercy or memory. The longer he had mastered himself up to that time, the more terrible and the blinder did his madness seem now. He would have killed her, beyond doubt, had it not been that her cries for assistance attracted the servants into the room. First, the man cutting wood at the kitchen broke in with an axe through the window; after him came kitchen servants, the two Kshepetski sisters, the butler and two of Pan Pongowski's old servitors.

The butler—a noble from a distant village in Mazovia—was a man of rare strength, though rather aged; he caught Martsian by the shoulders and drew them so mightily that the elbows almost met.

"You wouldn't do that, your grace!" exclaimed he. "It is a disgrace!"

"Let me go!" roared Kshepetski.

But the iron hands held him as in forge-tongs, and a stern, low voice was heard near his ear:

"Compose yourself, your grace, or I will break your bones!"

Meanwhile the sisters led, or rather carried, the young lady from the dining-room.

The butler continued:

"Come to the chancery, your grace, I beg you earnestly." And he began to push him as he would a child, while Martsian, with chattering teeth, moved on with his bow-legs, crying for the hangman and for ropes; but he could not resist, for since the first outburst he had grown so weak that he was unable even to stand unassisted.

Thus, when the butler, in the chancery, threw him on the horse-skin with which the bed was covered, Martsian did not even try to rise; he lay there motionless, like the stump of a tree, breathing heavily, like an overworked horse.

"Something to drink!" he cried.

The butler opened the door, called a servant and, whispering some words, gave him keys. The servant returned with a pint glass and a bottle of brandy.

The butler filled the glass to the brim, sniffed at it, and said, approaching Martsian:

"Drink, your grace."

Kshepetski seized the glass with both hands, but they trembled so that the liquor dropped on his breast. Then the butler raised him on his bed and put the glass to his lips.

Martsian drank, holding the glass greedily when the butler tried to remove it from his mouth. At last he drank all and fell backward.

"Perhaps it is too much," said the butler; "but you became very weak."

Martsian wished to answer, but he merely hissed in the

air, like a man who has burned his lips with too hot a liquid.

"Eh," said the butler, "you owe me a good reward, for I have done you a great service. God preserve us! if anything happened in such an affair, it is the axe and the executioner, not to mention that misfortune might happen here even now. The people love that young lady beyond measure; and it will be difficult to hide what has happened from the prelate, though I will tell all to be silent. How do you feel?"

Martsian gazed at him with dim eyes, still panting for breath. Once and again he tried to say something; then he suddenly closed his eyes, and a rattling came from his throat, as if the man were dying.

"Sleep or die, you dirty dog!" growled the butler, as he looked at him. And he went out of the room. Half an hour later he knocked at the door of the young lady's room, and, finding the two sisters with her, he said to them:

"Ladies, perhaps you would look in a moment at the young lord in the chancery, for he has grown very feeble. But if he sleeps do not wake him."

Then, when he remained alone with Panna Seninska, he inclined to her knees and said:

"Young lady, you must flee from here. All is ready."

Though broken and barely able to stand on her feet, she sprang up from her seat.

"Good! I am ready! Save me!"

"A wagon is waiting beyond the river. I will conduct you to it. To-night I will bring your clothing. Pan Kshepetski is drunk and will lie like a log until morning. Only take a cloak and come. No one will stop us; have no fear."

"May God reward you! may God reward you!" repeated Panna Seninska, feverishly.

They went out through the garden to that gate by which

Yatzek used to enter from Virombki. On the way the butler said to her:

"Vilchopolski arranged the matter long ago with the servants that if some attack upon you were attempted they were to set fire to the granary. Pan Kshepetski would run to the fire, and you would have time to escape through the garden to a place beyond the river, where a man was to wait with a wagon. But it is better this way, without starting the fire; for to set fire is a crime, under any circumstances. Kshepetski, I say, will be like a stone until morning, so there will be no pursuit."

"Where are we to go?"

"To Pan Ciprianowicz; there you will be safe. Vilchopolski is there; so are the Bukoyemskis and other foresters. Kshepetski will try to take you back, but he will not succeed; and later on Pan Ciprianowicz will conduct you to Radom or to some other place, which will be decided upon by the priests. Here is the wagon. Fear no pursuit. It is not far to Yedlina, and, besides, God has given us a wonderful evening. I will bring your clothing to-night. If they don't let me take it, I will not mind them. May the Holy Virgin, the guardian and protectress of orphans, protect you!"

Saying this, he lifted her, like a child, into the wagon, and cried to the driver:

"Go ahead!"

It was growing dark by this time; the shadows of night were gathering rapidly, but from the last rays of the dying twilight the stars were rosy in the serene sky. The calm evening was filled with the odor of earth, of leaves and blossoming lilacs, and nightingales poured forth their songs, like a warm spring rain, over the garden, the alders and the entire neighborhood.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE evening Pan Ciprianowicz was sitting on a bench in the front of his house, entertaining Father Voinowski, who had come after evening prayers to see him, and the four Bukoyemskis, who were staying then permanently at Yedlina. Before them stood a table, and on it were a pitcher of mead and glasses. They were listening to the soft murmur of the forest, drinking slowly, raising their eyes to the moonlit sky, and conversing of the war.

"Thanks to God and to your grace, we shall soon be ready for the road again," said Matvey Bukoyemski. "What has happened is past. Even saints have sinned. One should, therefore, not be too exacting with men who cannot make a step without the grace of God. But when I look at the moon, and recall that the Turks worship it, my hands begin to itch as if mosquitoes had stung it. Well, may God hasten the war. Perhaps that will make us feel better."

The youngest Bukoyemski became thoughtful for a while.

"Why is it, my reverend benefactor," he asked, "that Turks worship the moon and bear it on their standard?"

"But do not dogs pray toward the moon, also?" asked the priest.

"Of course; but why do the Turks worship it?"

"By God! why do they?" said the young man, looking at the priest with surprise.

"But the moon is not to blame," remarked the host;

"and it is delightful to gaze at it when in the calm of night it paints the trees with its light, as if some one had covered them with silver. I love greatly to sit alone on such a night, gaze at the sky, and marvel at God's almightiness."

"Yes; at such times the soul soars on wings, as it were, to its Creator," said the priest. "The merciful God created the moon as well as the sun, and that is an immense benefaction. As to the sun—well, everything is visible in the daytime; but if there were no moon, travelers would break their necks in the night; besides, in perfect darkness devilish wickedness would be much worse."

The priest became silent for a while and passed over the peaceful sky with his eyes, took a pinch of snuff, and added:

"Fix this in your memories, gentlemen: a kind Providence thinks not only of our needs, but also of our comfort."

The rattle of wheels, which, in the stillness of the night, reached their ears very clearly, interrupted the conversation.

Pan Ciprianowicz rose from the bench and said:

"God is sending some guest, for the whole household is here. I am curious to know who it may be."

"What if it is some one with news from our boys?" said the priest.

All rose, and by that time a wagon drawn by two horses entered the open gate of the yard.

"Some woman is in the wagon," called out Lukash Bukoyemski. "That is true."

The wagon passed around the yard and stopped at the entrance. Pan Serafin looked at the face of the woman, recognized it in the moonlight, and cried:

"Panna Seninska!"

And he almost lifted her out of the wagon. She bent to his knees and burst into sobs.

"An orphan has come to beg for a refuge and aid!"

She clasped his knees and sobbed bitterly. Such great astonishment seized every man there that for a time no one uttered a syllable; at last Pan Ciprianowicz raised the guest and pressed her to his heart, and exclaimed:

"While there is life in me I will be to you a father, orphan. But what has happened? Have they driven you from Belchonchki?"

"Kshepetski has beaten me and threatened to dishonor me," said she, in a barely audible voice.

But Father Voinowski, who was very near, heard this answer.

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!" he cried, clutching his white hair with both hands.

The four Bukoyemskis gazed open-mouthed and wide-eyed, but understood nothing. Their hearts were moved at once, it is true, by the weeping of the orphan, but they considered that Panna Seninska had wrought grave injustice on Yatzek. They remembered, also, the teaching of Father Voinowski—that woman is the cause of all evil; so they looked at one another inquiringly, as if hoping that some clear idea would come, if not to one, to another of them.

At last Marek said:

"Well, there is Kshepetski for you. But, in any case, Martsian will get from us a ——; won't he?"

And he felt at his left side; and, following his example, the other three brothers began to feel for their sabres.

Meanwhile Pan Ciprianowicz had led the young lady into the house and committed her to Pani Dzvonkowski, his housekeeper, a woman of sensitive heart and irrepressible eloquence, and he told her that she was to take the utmost care of Panna Seninska. He said that the housekeeper was to give her own bedroom to the lady, light the

house, make a fire in the kitchen, find calming medicines and plasters for the bruises, and prepare heated wine and various dainties. He advised the young lady herself to lie down in bed until all was given to her, and to rest, leaving the story till the next day.

But she wished to unburden her heart at once to the people with whom she had sought refuge. She wanted to cast out immediately from her soul all that anguish which had been gathering so long in it, and that misfortune, shame, humiliation and torture in which she had been living at Belchonchki. Shutting herself up with Father Voinowski and Pan Ciprianowicz, she spoke as if to a confessor and a father. She confessed everything; she told them of her longing for Yatzek, and that she had consented to marry her guardian only because she had heard from the Bukoyemskis that Yatzek was to marry Panna Zbierzkhowski. Finally, she also told them what her life had been in Belchonchki; what she had endured there; how the two sisters had tortured her. She related the ghastly advances of Martsian, and the happenings of that day which were the cause of her flight from the house.

And they seized their own heads while they were listening. The hand of Father Voinowski—an old soldier—went to his left side involuntarily, in the manner of the Bukoyemskis, though for many a day he had not carried a weapon; but the kind Pan Serafin clasped the girl's head and said to her:

“Let him try to take you back! I had only a son, but now God has given me a daughter.”

Father Voinowski, who had been struck most by what she had said touching Yatzek, remembering all that had happened, could not take in the position immediately. Hence he thought and thought, smoothed with his palm the whole

length of his crown, which was milk-white, and then asked, finally:

"Did you know of that letter which Pan Pongowski wrote to Yatzek?"

"I begged my guardian to write it."

"Then I understand nothing. Why did you do so?"

"Because I wanted Yatzek to return to us."

"How could he return?" cried the priest, angrily. "The letter was such that, just because of it, Yatzek went away to the ends of the earth, broken-hearted, to forget and cast out of him that love which you, my young lady, trampled."

Her eyes blinked from amazement, and she folded her hands, as if praying.

"My guardian told me that he had written a fatherly letter. O Holy Virgin! what was there in it?"

"Insults, contempt, derision over the man's poverty and his honor. Do you understand?"

Then from the girl's breast was rent a shriek of such pain and sincerity that the honest heart of the priest quivered in him. He came over to her, removed the hands with which she had covered her face, and asked:

"Then you did not know of this, and you wished Yatzek to return?"

"I did!"

"In God's name! Why was that?"

Then tear-drops, like pearls, began again to fall from her closed lashes in abundance; her face flushed for shame, she breathed with difficulty, and her heart throbbed like that of a captured bird. At last, after a great effort, she whispered:

"Because I love him!"

"For God's sake, my child! is that possible?" cried out Father Voinowski.

But his voice broke off, for tears were choking him, also.

He was seized at the same instant by delight, and immense compassion for the girl, and astonishment that "a woman" in this case was not the cause of all evil, but an innocent lamb on which so much suffering had fallen—God knew for what reason. He caught her in his arms and pressed her to his heart.

"My child! my child!" repeated he, time after time.

The Bukoyemskis meanwhile had betaken themselves, with the glasses and pitcher, to the dining-room, had emptied the pitcher conscientiously to the bottom, and were waiting for the priest and Pan Serafin, in the hope that with their coming supper would be put on the table.

They returned at last with moistened eyes and with agitated faces. Ciprianowicz breathed deeply, and said:

"Pani Dzvonkowski is putting the poor girl to bed. Indeed, it is incredible. We, too, are to blame; but the Kshepetskis—it is simply a shame and a disgrace! We shall not let him go unpunished."

"Of course not!" answered Marek. "We will talk about this with the 'Stump.' Oi, Oi!"

"We are very sorry for her, but still I think that God punished her for Yatzek. Is that not true?"

"You are a fool!" replied Father Voinowski.

"But how is that? Why?"

But the old man, whose breast was filled with pity, began to talk quickly and passionately of the innocence and suffering of the girl, as if wishing in that way to make up for the injustice which he had permitted regarding her; but after a time all discussion was interrupted by the coming of Pani Dzvonkowski, who burst into the room like a bomb into a fortress.

Pani Dzvonkowski's face was as flooded with tears as if she had dipped it in a bucket of water, and right on the threshold she began to cry, outstretching her arms:

"Kind people, whoever believes in God—vengeance! justice! My God! her dear shoulders are bruised, her snow-white shoulders; her hair torn out by the handful, her golden hair! My dear dove! my precious little flower! my innocent lamb!"

Matvey Bukoyemski, already excited by the narrative of Father Voinowski, roared; Marek, Lukash and Yan joined him.

The servants rushed into the dining-hall at this roaring and the dogs began to bark at the entrance. But Vilchopolski, who returned from his night review of the fields, found the brothers in another mood. Their hair was on end, their eyes wide open with rage, their hands grasping their swords.

"Blood!" shouted Lukash.

"Give us that scoundrel!"

"Kill him!"

"Cut him to pieces with our swords!"

And as one man they moved toward the door; but Pan Ciprianowicz blocked their way.

"Halt!" he exclaimed; "he deserves not the sword, but the hangman!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

It took Pan Serafin quite a long time to pacify the angry brothers. He explained to them that if they were to kill Martsian Kshepetski at once it would be the act of assassins, not that of nobles.

"First of all," he said, "it is necessary to visit our neighbors; to talk the matter over with the prelate; to get public opinion on our side; to have the support of the clergy and the nobles; to obtain the testimony of the servants at Belchonchki; then to take the case before a tribunal; and only when the sentence is passed to stand behind it with weapons. If," continued he, "you were to kill Martsian immediately, his father would not fail to report in all places that Panna Seninska had conspired with you to do that. By this her reputation would suffer; and the old man would summon you; and, instead of going to the war, you would have to drag around through tribunals. That is how it is."

"How so?" inquired Yan, with sorrow. "Are we to let the wrong done this dove go unpunished?"

"But do you think," said the priest, "that life will be pleasant for Martsian Kshepetski when he will be disgraced or stand under the axe of the headsman? What sort of life will be his when he will meet contempt on every side? That is a worse torment than a quick death would be, and I should not wish, for all the silver in the world, to be in his skin at this moment."

"But if he will wriggle out?" inquired Marek. "His

father is an old trickster, who has won more than one doubtful lawsuit."

"If he wriggles out, Yatzek, on returning, will whisper a word in his ear. You do not know Yatzek yet. He has the eyes of a maiden, but it is safer to take the young cubs away from a she-bear than to trouble him unjustly."

At this Vilchopolski, till then only listening, spoke, in a stern voice:

"Pan Kshepetski is as well as convicted, whether he awaits the return of Pan Tachewski or not. But there is another point: he will try to get back the young lady by force, and then——"

"Then we shall see!" interrupted Pan Ciprianowicz.

"But let him only try! let him only try!" said the Bukoyemskis.

"But, gentlemen," said Vilchopolski, "you are going to the war."

"That will make no difference," replied Father Voynowski.

At this time the butler arrived with Panna Seninska's wardrobe, which, as he had foreseen, he got only with great difficulty. The Kshepetski sisters tried to prevent him, and even wished to wake Martsian and keep the trunks in the mansion, but they could not wake him; and the butler persuaded them that they should not act thus, both in view of their own good and that of their brother, otherwise an action would be brought against them for robbery, and they would be summoned for damages before a tribunal. As women who do not know the law, they were frightened, and allowed him to take the trunks. The butler thought that Martsian would surely try to get back the young lady, but he did not think that the man would use violence immediately.

"His father, who understands well the significance of

*raptus puellae*, will restrain him from doing that. He knows nothing yet of what has happened, but from here I will go to him directly and explain the whole matter, for two reasons: first, so that he may restrain Martsian; and second, because I do not wish to be in Belchonchki to-morrow when Martsian wakes and learns that I have helped the young lady in fleeing. He would surely rush on me, and then to one of us something ugly might happen."

Pan Serafin and Father Voinowski praised the man's prudence, and, finding that he was disposed to them, and experienced, a man who had seen the world, and who knew the law, they begged him to aid in examining the question. There were two councils then, one of these being formed of the four Bukoyemskis.

Pan Ciprianowicz, knowing how best to restrain them from murderous intentions and detain them at home, sent a large bottle of good mead to the brothers; this they were glad to besiege at the moment, and began to drink one another's health. Their hearts were moved, and they remembered involuntarily the night when Panna Seninska crossed for the first time the threshold of that house there in Yedlina. They now recalled how they had all fallen in love with her at first sight; how, through her, they had quarreled, and then, in one voice, adjudged her to Stanislaw, thus sacrificing their own feelings.

At last Matvey drank his mead, supported his head with his palm, sighed, and said:

"Yatzek was sitting that night in a tree like a squirrel. Who could have thought then that God had predestined her for him?"

"And commanded us to drag on our existence in orphanhood!"

"Do you remember," asked Lukash, "how the rooms were all bright from her presence? They would not have been

brighter from a hundred burning candles. And she would stand up, sit down or laugh. And when she looked at a man he felt as warm as if he had drunk heated wine that same instant. Let us take a glass now to drown our terrible sadness."

They drank again; then Matvey struck a blow with his fist on the table, and shouted:

"Eh! if she had not loved Yatzek!"

"Then what?" asked Yan, angrily. "Do you think that she would fall in love with you right away? Look at him—my dandy!"

And they looked at each other with ill-feeling. But Lukash, though given greatly to quarrels, began now to pacify his brothers.

"She is not for you, not for you, not for any of us," said he. "Another will get her and take her to the altar."

"For us there is nothing but sorrow and tears," said Marek.

"Then at least let us love one another. No one in this world loves us—no one!"

"No one! no one!" repeated Lukash and Matvey, mingling their wine with their tears.

"But she is sleeping up there!" added Yan, on a sudden.

"She is sleeping, the poor little thing!" responded Lukash; "she is lying down like a flower cut by a sharp scythe, like a lamb torn by a villainous wolf. Brothers! is there no man here who will take even a pull at the wolf?"

"Of course there is!" cried out Matvey, Marek and Yan.

And again they grew indignant, and the more they drank the oftener they gritted their teeth, and they struck the table with their fists.

"I have an idea!" suddenly exclaimed the youngest.

"Tell it! Have God in your heart!"

"You see, we have promised Pan Ciprianowicz not to cut up that 'Stump.' Have we not promised?"

"We have; but you had better tell what you have to say; ask no questions."

"I think we ought to take revenge for our young lady, anyway. Old Kshepetski will come here, as they said, to see if Pan Serafin will not give back the young lady. But we know that he will not give her; do we not?"

"He will not; he will not!"

"But don't you think that Martsian will hurry to meet his father, to find out if he has succeeded?"

"As God is holy, he will do so."

"On the road, half-way between Belchonchki and Yedlina, there is a tar-pit near the roadside. How about waiting at that tar-pit for Martsian?"

"Well, but what for?"

"Sh! quiet!"

"Sh!"

And they began to look around through the room, though they knew that, save themselves, there was not a living soul in it; and then they whispered. They whispered long, now louder, now lower. At last their faces brightened, they finished drinking their wine, embraced one another and quietly went out of the room, one by one.

Then they saddled their horses and led them by the bits from the courtyard to the road. Yan, though the youngest, took command, and said to his brothers:

"Marek and I will start for the tar-pit at once, and you bring that barrel before daybreak."

## CHAPTER XX.

OLD KSHEPETSKI came to Yedlina in the afternoon of the next day, as the butler had predicted; but, beyond all expectation, he looked so cheerful and so kind that Pan Ciprianowicz, who had not quite finished his after-dinner nap, became wide-awake with astonishment at the sight of him. The old fox began to talk of neighborly kindness while he was yet on the threshold; he said that it would be a great joy to him in his old age if they visited each other more frequently; he thanked him for the cordial welcome, and only after a heap of courtesies did he approach the real question.

"Neighbor and benefactor," he said, "I have come to pay my respects, but, at the same time, as you must have divined, with a request which, in view of my old age, I have no doubt you will heed."

"I shall willingly grant any just request that you may make," replied Pan Serafin.

The old man rubbed his hands.

"I knew it! I knew it beforehand!" he said. "By God, it is agreeable to deal with a wise man! The matter can be settled at once. I have said to my son: 'Depend upon me. It is easy to arrange matters with Pan Ciprianowicz, for there is not a wiser and worthier man than he in the entire neighborhood.'"

"You flatter me too much."

"No, no; I say too little! But let us come to the question."

"Very well."

Old Kshepetski maintained silence for a minute, as though searching his mind for adequate words. He merely moved his jaws so that his beard almost reached his nose. Finally he laughed merrily, placed the palm of his hand on Pan Serafin's knee, and began:

"Benefactor, you know that our goldfinch has flown from the cage?"

"I know. It must have been scared away by the cat."

"Well, is it not a pleasure to speak to such people!" exclaimed the old man again, rubbing his hands. "This is what I call wit! The prelate Tvorkowski himself would burst for envy, by God!"

"I am listening."

"Well, then, to the point: we should like to take the goldfinch back."

"Why shouldn't you?"

Pan Kshepetski began to move his jaws; he was alarmed because the matter went too smoothly. Nevertheless, he clapped his hands and exclaimed, with feigned delight:

"Well, then, the question is settled! Would to God that there were more people like you in the world!"

"As for me, the question is settled," replied Pan Serafin. "But we must ask the bird whether she is willing to return, and to-day it is impossible even to ask her. Your son has choked her so that she is hardly breathing."

"Is she sick?"

"She is sick abed."

"Is she not pretending?"

Pan Ciprianowicz frowned at once, and replied:

"Esteemed sir, let us speak seriously. Your son has treated Panna Seninska disgracefully, in a manner unbecoming a man, unworthy of a noble; and you, too, have

sinned greatly before God and men because you gave this orphan into the hands of such a shameless brute."

"There is not even a fourth part of the truth in what she says!"

"What! But you don't know as yet what she has said; still you deny. It is not she who is speaking; her bruises, the traces of the blows, which my housekeeper saw on her young body, tell the story. As for Martsian, all the servants at Belchonchki saw his advances, and they are ready to testify before the tribunal, if necessary. Vilchopolski—he is now in my employ—will go to Radom to-day to tell the prelate what has happened."

"But you have promised to give me the girl."

"No. I merely said that I would not detain her. If she wishes to go back, very well. If she wishes to stay here, very well again. But do not ask me to refuse shelter and a morsel of bread to an orphan who has been treated so cruelly."

Old Kshepetski's jaws began to move still faster. He was silent for about a minute; then he said:

"You are right, and yet you are wrong. To refuse shelter and a morsel of bread to an orphan would be a disgraceful act; but, as a judicious man, you must consider that it is one thing not to refuse hospitality, and quite another to stir one up against the authority of a father. I love my youngest daughter, Tekla, with all my heart, and yet it happens sometimes that I give her a slap. Well, what of that? If, after being punished by me, she flee to you, would not you allow me to take her? Would you leave it to her decision? Just think of it! What sort of order would there be in the world if women had their way? Even a married woman, though she be old, must obey her husband and do as he orders; is an immature girl, then, to act against the will of her father or guardian?"

"Panna Seninska is not your daughter, nor even your relative."

"But we inherited the guardianship over her from Pan Pongowski. If Pongowski had punished the girl, you would not have said a word in her defense. The same should be in this case, for I have intrusted the management of Belchonchki to my son. There must be some one to manage things there; there must be some one there that has the right to punish. I do not deny that Martsian, who is young and hot-headed, perhaps exceeded the limit, especially since she was ungrateful to him. But that is my affair. I will look into the matter, judge it carefully and punish the guilty; but I will take the girl back; and I think—if you will allow me to say it—His Majesty the King himself would hardly have a right to hinder me in this matter."

"You speak as in a tribunal, and I do not deny that apparently you seem to be right. But that which seems and that which really is are two different things. I do not wish to hinder you in anything, but I tell you sincerely what the general opinion is. It is not at all a question of Panna Seninska with you, nor of guardianship over her. You suspect that there may be a will in the girl's favor in the prelate's possession, and you are afraid lest Belchonchki should slip away from your hands together with her. Not long ago I heard one of our neighbors speak in this way: 'If not for that uncertainty they would have driven the orphan out of the house long ago, for the people have not God in their hearts.' I feel very embarrassed to say all this to you in my house, but I must, so that you may know everything."

A spark of anger flashed in old Kshepetski's eyes; but he mastered himself, and answered, in a calm though somewhat abrupt voice:

"The malice of people! It is base malice, nothing more; and, besides, it is stupidity. How do you make that out? Would we drive from the house the girl whom Martsian wants to marry? Consider it, for heaven's sake! How will you reconcile these two things?"

"They say that if Belchonchki is willed to her, Martsian will marry her; if not, he will dishonor her. I am merely telling you what other people say; but I add from myself that your son really threatened to dishonor the girl. Of this I am convinced, and you, who know Martsian and his voluptuousness, will not deny that it was really so."

"I know a number of things, but I don't know what you wish to say."

"What I wish to say? I wish to say what I have already said to you. If Panna Seninska is willing to go back to you, I have no right to detain her, nor to oppose your will; but if she is not willing to go, then I will not drive her from my house, for I have promised her not to do it."

"It is not a question of your driving her out, but of your permitting me to take her, even as you would permit me to take my own daughter from your house. All I ask you is that you do not stand in our way."

"Then I will speak to you more clearly: I shall allow no violence in my house. I am the master of my own house, and you, having mentioned the King, ought to understand that His Majesty the King himself cannot take this right away from me."

When Pan Kshepetski heard this he pressed his hands together so firmly that his palms were pierced by his finger-nails; and he said:

"Violence! That is just what I fear. I, even if I ever had to act against people (and who of us has not come in contact with the wickedness of men?), have always acted according to the law, not by violence. It is an unjust

proverb that says 'the apple falls near its tree.' Sometimes it falls very far away. I wanted to settle this peacefully for your sake. You are helpless here in the forest, and Martsian—it is painful for a father to say it—Martsian has not taken after me. I am ashamed to say it, but I cannot vouch for him. The entire neighborhood fears his vehemence—and justly, for he will sometimes pay attention to nothing in the world, and he has fifty swords at his command. You are helpless, I repeat it; you are in the forest—and I advise you to consider this—I fear it myself."

At these words Pan Ciprianowicz rose and, advancing straight to Kshepetski, looked straight into his eyes.

"You want to frighten me?"

"I am afraid myself," repeated the old man.

Suddenly shouts resounded in the courtyard, coming from the direction of the kitchen and the granary. Both the host and the visitor rushed over to the open window, and they stood for a while as petrified with amazement. An unusual monster, unlike any creature on earth, was running toward the courtyard with terrible speed, and after it came the four Bukoyemskis, riding on excited horses, shouting and brandishing whip-lashes. The monster rushed into the yard first, and behind it came the four brothers, like hell-hunters, and they began to chase it around the fence.

"Jesus! Mary!" cried Pan Ciprianowicz.

And he ran out on the porch, followed by old Kshepetski.

Only there could they see more distinctly. The monster looked like an immense bird, but also like a man on horseback, for it ran on four legs, with a figure sitting on it. But horse and rider were so covered with feathers that their heads looked like fleecy clouds. It was impossible to discern the details, for the horse rushed along the fence, and

the Bukoyemskis followed him closely, sparing no blows, which caused the feathers to fall to the ground or, like snowflakes, to rise in the air.

The monster roared like a wounded bear; the Bukoyemskis also roared, and amidst the general tumult the voices of Pan Ciprianowicz and old Kshepetski were lost, though they shouted with all their might:

“Stop! For God’s sake, stop!”

But the riders kept rushing on and on, as though seized with madness, and thus they rode five times around the yard. But at the cry of Pan Serafin the servants ran out from the kitchen, from the stables and the barns, and began to check the horses of the Bukoyemskis by seizing their bits and bridles. At last the four horses of the Bukoyemskis were brought to a standstill, but there was still great difficulty in stopping the feather-covered horse. Without a bridle, beaten with knouts, deafened and scared, the horse rose on its hind legs at the sight of the servants, or jumped aside with lightning-like rapidity, so that they caught him just as he was preparing to jump across the fence. One of the servants grasped the horse by the forelock, another by the nostrils, and several seized him by the mane. With such a weight the horse could not move, and he fell to his knees. He made another attempt to rush away; but soon he became restful, and a quiver shot through his body from time to time.

Then the rider was taken off, and it was seen then that he had not been thrown off because his feet were tied firmly under the horse’s belly. They wiped his face, but under the feathers there was such a thick coat of tar on his face that it was impossible to recognize the features. The rider showed but faint signs of life, and only when he was carried to the porch did Pan Ciprianowicz recognize him. Pan

Kshepetski also recognized him, and both cried out, terror-stricken:

“Martsian!”

“That’s the scoundrel!” said Matvey Bukoyemski, breathing with difficulty. “We have punished him for something, and have chased him over here so that Panna Seninska may know that there are still some tender souls in the world.”

Pan Ciprianowicz clasped his head, and cried:

“May the devil take you with your tender souls, you accursed rascals!”

Then, turning to Pani Dzvonkowski, who had come out with the others, and who was making the sign of the cross, he cried:

“Pour vodka into his throat, let him come to himself, and let some one carry him to bed!”

General confusion ensued. Some ran off to prepare a bed, others to boil some water, still others were removing the feathers from Martsian. Old Kshepetski aided them in this, gnashing his teeth and muttering:

“Are you alive? Are you dead? Vengeance, vengeance!”

Then he suddenly sprang from his place, rushed over to Pan Ciprianowicz, and, bending his fingers like the paw of a wild beast, and holding them up before his very eyes, he cried:

“You were in the conspiracy! You have killed my son, you Armenian murderer!”

Ciprianowicz turned very pale and clasped his sword; but he immediately recalled that he was the host and that Kshepetski was his guest; so he dropped the hilt and, raising two fingers, said, solemnly:

“I swear by God that I knew nothing about this, and I am ready to swear to that by the sacred cross. Amen!”

“We are witnesses!” blurted out Matvey Bukoyemski.

Pan Ciprianowicz added:

"God has punished you because you have threatened me, as a defenseless old man, with the violent temper of your son!"

"It's a criminal offense!" roared the old man. "I'll turn you over to the hangman! I'll have your heads under the sword! Vengeance! Justice!"

"See what you have done!" said Pan Ciprianowicz, addressing the Bukoyemskis.

"I said we should have run away at once!" declared Lukash.

By this time Pani Dzvonnkowski appeared with brandy, and she began to pour it into Martsian's open mouth. Martsian coughed and immediately opened his eyes.

The old man ran over to him.

"Alive! alive!" he sobbed, in an outburst of wild joy.

But Martsian could not answer as yet; he lay like a large owl which, hit by a bullet, fell on its back and was convulsively twitching its outstretched wings. Nevertheless he was regaining consciousness, and with it also his memory. His eyes wandered from his father's face to that of Pan Serafin, and then they were fixed on the Bukoyemskis. He looked so terrible now that if there had been the least place for fear in the hearts of the Bukoyemskis a shudder would have passed through their frames, from head to foot.

But they advanced a step toward him, like four bulls which were ready to gore, and Matvey asked:

"Well? Haven't you had enough?"

## CHAPTER XXI.

A FEW hours later old Kshepetski took Martsian to Belchonchki, though the young man was as yet unable to stand and did not quite realize what had happened to him. The servants had washed him with great trouble, and had put on him fresh linen; but after this had been done Martsian grew so weak that he fainted repeatedly, and thanks only to the medicine which Pani Dzvinkowski gave him he was brought back to consciousness. Pan Serafin advised to put him in bed and let him stay there until he recovered; but Pan Kshepetski, who was enraged, did not wish to be indebted to a man against whom he was planning a lawsuit for harboring Panna Seninska; hence he had them put hay in a wagon, and, placing a rug, instead of a bed, under Martsian, he moved toward Belchonchki, hurling threats at the Bukoyemskis and also at Pan Serafin. While threatening vengeance, he was forced to accept Pan Serafin's assistance and borrow from him hay, clothing and linen; but, blinded by anger, he took no note of the strange situation. Pan Serafin himself had no mind whatever for laughter, since the act of the four brothers disturbed and concerned him very greatly.

By this time came Father Voinowski, who had been summoned by letter. The Bukoyemskis, greatly confused, were sitting in their rooms, not showing their noses; hence Pan Ciprianowicz had to tell all that had happened. The priest struck the skirt of his soutane from time to time as he lis-

tened, but he was not so grieved as Pan Serafin had expected.

"If Martsian dies," he said, "then woe to the Bukoyemskis; but if, as I think, he pulls through, I suppose that he will try to take private vengeance and will not start a lawsuit."

"What makes you think so?" asked Pan Serafin.

"It is not particularly pleasant to be made a laughing-stock before the country. At the same time his conduct toward Panna Seninska would be discovered. That would give him no enviable reputation. His life is not laudable, hence he should avoid the chance of letting witnesses tell in public what they know of him."

"That may be true," said Ciprianowicz, "but it is difficult to forgive the Bukoyemskis such a nasty trick."

The priest only waved his hand.

"The Bukoyemskis will always remain the Bukoyemskis."

"How?" asked Pan Serafin, with astonishment. "I thought you would regard this more sternly."

"My dear Pan Ciprianowicz," said the old man, "you have served in the army, but I have served longer, and have seen so many soldiers' tricks during my time that nothing common can surprise me. It is bad that such things happen; I blame the Bukoyemskis; but I have seen worse things, especially as in this case the question was of an orphan. I will go still further and say sincerely that I would grieve more if Martsian's deed had gone unpunished. Think! We are old, but if we were young our hearts, too, would boil up over deeds such as his are. That is why I cannot blame the Bukoyemskis altogether."

"True, true; but, still, Martsian may not live until morning."

"That is in the hands of God; but you told me he was not wounded."

"He is not; there is only one blue mark; but he faints continually."

"Oh, he will get over that; he fainted from fatigue. But I must go to the Bukoyemskis and inquire how it happened," and he went off.

The brothers received him cheerfully, for they hoped that he would take their part with Pan Serafin. They began to quarrel at once as to who should give an account of what had happened, and stopped only when the priest gave Matvey the primacy.

Matvey spoke as follows:

"Father benefactor! God sees our innocence! When we learned from Pani Dzvonkowski that the poor little orphan had blue marks all over her body we came into this room in such grief that had it not been for the mead which Pan Serafin sent us in a pitcher our hearts would have burst, perhaps. And I say to your grace, we drank and shed tears—we drank and shed tears. And we had this in mind, too: that she was no common girl, but a young lady descended from senators. It is known to you, for example, that the higher blood a horse has, the thinner his skin is; slash a common drudge with a whip, he will hardly feel it; but strike a noble steed, and immediately a welt will come out of him. Think, Father benefactor, what a thin, tender skin such a dear little girl must have on her shoulders and all over her body—just like satin. Say yourself——"

"What do I know of her skin?" cried Father Voinowski, angrily. "Tell me better how you got hold of Martsian."

"We promised Pan Ciprianowicz on oath not to cut him in pieces; but we knew that old Kshepetski would come here, and we guessed immediately that Martsian would gallop out to meet him. So two of us took down to the tar-

pit before daylight a great feather-bed, which we got from the wife of a forester. We picked out at the place a cask of thick tar and waited at the hut near the tar-pit. We saw old Kshepetski riding along; very well, we let him ride! We waited and waited, till we were tired of waiting; then we thought of going to Belchonchki. That moment a boy from the tar-pit told us that Martsian was coming up the road. We rode out and stopped in front of him. 'We bow to you! we bow to you! But where are you bound for?' 'Straight ahead,' says he, 'through the woods.' 'But to whose harm?' 'To harm or to profit,' says he, 'get out of this!' and then to the sword. But we seized him by the neck. 'Oh, this cannot be!' cried he. In a flash we had him down from the horse, which Yan took by the bridle. He began to scream, and kick, and bite; but we, like a lightning flash, took him to the barrels, which stood one near the other, and said: 'Oh, you scoundrel! you will injure orphans, threaten young ladies with infamy, disregard noble blood, beat an orphan on the shoulders, and think that no one will take the part of your victim; learn now that there are tender hearts in the country.' And that moment we thrust him into the tar, head downward. We raised him out, and again in with him. 'Learn that there are feeling souls!' said we, and in with him then among the feathers. 'Learn what chivalrous daring means!' and again we tossed him into the tar-barrel. 'Learn to know the Bukoyemskis.' We wanted to dip him once more, but the tar-boiler shouted that he would smother; and, indeed, he was thickly coated, so that neither his nose nor his eyes were visible to any one. We put him then on the saddle and tied his feet firmly under the horse's belly, so he could not fall off. We tarred the horse, too, and scattered feathers over him; took off the bridle and, lashing the horse with whips, we drove him ahead of us."

"And you drove him up here?"

"We wished to cheer up the young lady a bit and show her our brotherly affection."

"It was a fine way of cheering her up! When she saw him through the window the fright nearly killed her."

"When she recovers she will think of us gratefully. Orphans are always glad to know that somebody protects them."

"You have done her more harm than good. Who knows if the Kshepetskis will not take her away again?"

"How is that? By dear God, we will not let them!"

"But who will defend the girl when you are in prison?"

When they heard this the brothers were greatly concerned and looked at one another with anxious eyes. But Lukash at last struck his forehead.

"We will not be imprisoned," said he, "for first we will go to the army; but if it comes to that, if there is question of Panna Seninska's safety, help will be found."

"Found! Of course, it will!" cried out Marek.

"What help?" inquired Father Voinowski.

"We will challenge Martsian as soon as he recovers. He will not go alive out of our hands."

"But if he dies now?"

"Then God will help us."

"But you will pay with your lives!"

"Before that we will kill so many Turks that the Lord Jesus will reward us. Only let your grace take our part with Pan Ciprianowicz, for if Stanislav had been here he would have helped us give the bath to Martsian."

"But would not Yatzek bathe him?" inquired Matvey.

"Yatzek will give him a better bath!" cried the priest, involuntarily.

Pan Ciprianowicz appeared with a ready and weighty de-

cision, for he said at once, in a tone admitting of no argument:

"I have been thinking of what we should do, and do you know what I have decided? We should go to Cracow with Panna Seninska. I know not if we shall see our boys in that city, for no one knows where the regiments are quartered, or what the order of their marching is. But we should place the girl under the protection of the King or the Queen, or, if that is not done, secure her in some cloister for a season. I have also determined, as you know, to take the field in my old age and serve with my son, or, if such be God's will, to die with him. During our absence the girl would not be safe, even in Radom, under the protection of the prelate Tvorkowski. These gentlemen"—here he pointed to the Bukoyemskis—"need to be under the hetman as soon as possible. It is unknown what might happen should they stay here. I have acquaintances at court—Pan Matchinski, Pan Glinski, Pan Grotus, and I can get their influence for the orphan. When that is done I will find Zbierzhkhowski's regiment and go straight to my son, where I shall find Yatzek also. What do you think of this?"

"By God!" cried Father Voinowski, "this is a splendid idea! I will go with you, too, and I will go with you to Yatzek! And as to Panna Seninska, all will be well! The Sobieskis owe a great debt to the Seninskis. Besides, she will be out of danger in Cracow, and nearer—— For I am certain that Yatzek has not forgotten her, either; and after the war is over God only knows what will happen. In Radom they will give me a substitute for my parish, and I will go with you."

"All together," roared the Bukoyemskis, with joy, "to Cracow!"

"And to the field of glory!" concluded the priest.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE question as to the expedition was now decided definitely, and Father Voinowski was searching for a vicar in Radom. In fact, the question had been settled before: the only new feature was to take Panna Seninska to Cracow in order to protect her against the Kshepetskis. Pan Serafin saw that the King, occupied as he was with the war, would have no time to talk about private complaints; but there remained the Queen, to whom access might be easy through notable dignitaries, related for the greater part to the Seninskis and the Tachewskis.

There was also the danger that the Kshepetskis might attack Yedlina, when Pan Serafin and the Bukoyemskis had gone, and seize on rich property in furniture and silver. But Vilchopolski guaranteed that with the servants and the foresters he would defend the place and not let the Kshepetskis touch anything. Pan Serafin, however, took the silver to Radom and left it in one of the cloisters, where he had left money before that in large sums, not wishing to keep it at home, near the edge of great forests.

Meanwhile Pan Serafin kept an attentive ear toward Belchonchki, for much depended on that place. If Martian died, the Bukoyemskis would have to face a grave charge; if he recovered, hope existed that there would not be even a lawsuit, since it was difficult to admit that the Kshepetskis would expose themselves willingly to ridicule. Pan Serafin considered as more likely that the old man

would not leave him at peace about Panna Seninska; but he thought that if the orphan were in the care of the King the kernel of the lawsuit would be lost to the Kshepetskis. He learned from the butler that the old man had gone to Radom and Lublin, but that he had remained there only for a short time.

During the first week after his experience Martsian suffered grievously, and there was fear that the tar which he had swallowed might choke him or stop his intestines; but the second week he grew better. He did not, it is true, leave the bed, for he had not strength to stand unassisted; his bones pained him greatly and he was mortally weary; but he began to curse the Bukoyemskis and to take keen delight in projects of vengeance. In fact, after two weeks had passed, his "revelers from Radom" began to visit him: various gallows-birds, with sabres held up by hempen cords, men with holes in their boots and gaunt stomachs—thirsty and hungry at all hours. Meanwhile he counseled with these, and was plotting not only against the Bukoyemskis and Pan Serafin, but against the young lady, of whom he could not think without a gnashing of teeth; and he developed such monstrous inventions against her that his father forewarned him that they were of criminal nature.

The echo of those plots and threats reached Yedlina and produced various impressions on different people. Pan Serafin, a brave man, but prudent, was somewhat alarmed by them, especially when he remembered that the enmity of these wicked and dangerous people might strike his son, also. Father Voinowski, who had hotter blood in his veins, was keenly indignant, and prophesied that the Kshepetskis would meet a vile ending. Though entirely won over to the girl, he turned from time to time to Pan Ciprianowicz and then to the Bukoyemskis and said:

"Who caused the Trojan war? *Mulier!* Who has al-

ways been the cause of quarrels and battle? A woman! It is the same now! Innocent or guilty—yet a woman!”

But the Bukoyemskis regarded the danger which threatened every one from Martsian lightly, and even promised themselves various amusements because of it. They were warned, however, seriously from many sides. The Sulgostowskis, the Silnitskis, the Kokhanowskis and others, all greatly indignant at Martsian, came, one after the other, with tidings to Yedlina. They said that he was gathering a party, and even bandits of the forest. They offered assistance, but the brothers wished no assistance.

Lukash, who spoke most frequently in the name of the other three, replied to Rafael Silnitski, who implored them to be careful:

“Before the war it is worth while to practice and straighten ourselves out, for we have become somewhat rusty. Belchonchki is no fortress, so let Martsian see to his own safety; for who knows what may strike him? And if he wishes to repay us with ingratitude, let him try it!”

Pan Silnitzki looked with astonishment at the four brothers and asked:

“Repay with ingratitude? But I think he owes you no gratitude.”

Lukash grew sincerely indignant.

“How is that? Could we not have cut him to pieces? Who gave him life? Pani Kshepetski once, but the second time our moderation. If he is going to count on it always, tell him that he is mistaken.”

“And tell him that he will see Panna Seninska as much as he will see his own ears,” added Marek.

“Why shouldn’t he see his ears?” finished Yan. “It is not difficult for a man to see his ears if they are cut from him.”

Here the conversation ended. The brothers repeated it

to Panna Seninska, to calm her; which was superfluous, for the lady was not timid by nature. Besides, if she did fear the Kshepetskis, and especially Martsian, she felt that no danger threatened her in Yedlina. When, on the day after her arrival at Pan Serafin's, she saw through the window Martsian in feathers, looking like some filthy beast, urged on with whips by the Bukoyemskis, in the first moment of her dreadful surprise, which was mixed with amazement, and even compassion, she received so much confidence in the power of the brothers that she could not even imagine how any one could avoid fearing them. Martsian passed for a terrible person and a fighter, and see what they did with him! It is true that Yatzek, in her eyes, had grown now beyond common estimate altogether, and, in general, he appeared to her before the last parting from a side so mysterious that she did not know with what measure to esteem him. The remarks which were made about him by the Bukoyemskis themselves and Pan Serafin, with the words of the priest, who spoke of him oftenest, confirmed in her only wonder for that friend of her childhood, who had been so near to her once, but was now so remote and incomprehensible. There was now a longing and that sweet feeling toward Yatzek, which she had confessed to the priest in a moment of excitement and then again concealed in the depth of her heart, as a pearl is concealed in a mussel shell.

Nevertheless, there was in her soul an unshakable conviction that she would meet him in the near future. As she had torn herself from the house of the Kshepetskis, as she felt herself under the mighty protection of well-wishing people, that became the joy and the root of her existence. It restored her to health with contentment, and she bloomed afresh, as a flower blooms in springtime. That Yedlina mansion, which had been hitherto so serious, was now bright from

her presence. She had taken possession of Pani Dzvonkowski, of Pan Serafin, and of the Bukoyemskis. The whole house was filled with her, and wherever she showed her little, confident nose and her young, gladsome eyes delight and smiles followed. But she feared Father Voynowski a little, since it seemed to her that he held in his hands her fate, and also Yatzek's. Hence she looked upon him with a certain submissiveness. But with his compassionate heart, which, in general, was so warm for all God's creation, he loved her sincerely; and, besides, when he learned to know her more closely, he esteemed her pure spirit increasingly; though at times he called her a jaybird and a squirrel, because, as he said, she was poking her nose everywhere.

Yet after that first confession they spoke no more of Yatzek, just as if by agreement. Both felt it too delicate a matter. Pan Serafin made no mention of Yatzek to her in the presence of people, but when no one was with them he was not ceremonious on that point; and once, when she asked if he would meet his son quickly in Cracow, he answered with a question: "And would you not like to meet some one there, also?"

He thought that she would answer jestingly; but a shade of sadness came over her bright face, and she said, seriously:

"I should be glad to beg the forgiveness of him I have injured as soon as is possible."

Pan Serafin looked at her with emotion; but soon another idea must have flashed through his mind, for he stroked her rosy cheek and said:

"Eh! the King himself could not reward better than you can."

When she heard this she lowered her eyes, and she looked wonderful there, blushing like the dawn of the morning.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

PREPARATIONS for the departure went on briskly. Strong and sober men were selected as attendants. Arms, horses, wagons and carriages were ready. They had not forgotten to take along dogs, which in time of marching went under the wagons, and at places of rest used to hunt hares and foxes. The multitude of supplies and the complicated preparations astonished Panna Seninska, who had not supposed that a military expedition required such details; and, thinking that all that trouble was, perhaps, taken especially for her safety, she inquired of Pan Serafin whether it was really so. He, as a wise man of experience, replied:

“It is certain that I bear you in mind, for I think we shall not leave here without meeting some foul trick from Martsian. You have heard that he has summoned his bandits, with whom he is bargaining and drinking. We should be disgraced if we were to let any man snatch you away from us. What will be, will be; but, though we had to fall one on another, we must take you to Cracow uninjured.”

She kissed his hand, saying that she was not worthy to cause them this peril; but he interrupted her by saying:

“We should not dare to appear before men unless we did this; and matters, moreover, are such that each coincides with the other. It is not enough to set out for a war; one must prepare for it wisely. You are astonished that

we have three or four horses, each man of us, as well as attendants; but you must know that in war horses are the main question. Many of them die on the way, crossing rivers and marshes, or from various other accidents. And then what? If you buy in haste a new horse, it may be so bad and unruly that it will fail at the critical moment. Though my son and Tachewski took plenty of excellent horses along, we have decided to bring a new horse to each of them. Father Voinowski, than whom there is no better expert on horses, bought cheaply from old Pan Podlodowski such a Turkish steed for Yatzek that the hetman himself would not refuse to appear on him."

"Which horse is for your son?" inquired the young lady.

Pan Ciprianowicz looked at her, shook his head, smiled and said:

"Well, Father Voinowski is right in his judgment of woman. However pretty and kind she may be, there is always plenty of cunning about her. You ask which horse is for Stanislav. Well, I answer in this way: Yatzek's horse is that bay horse with a star on his forehead and a white spot on his left hind leg."

"You are annoying me!" exclaimed the young lady; and, rubbing against him like a kitten, she turned and then vanished. But that same day the pith of small loaves of bread and some salt disappeared from the dishes, and Lukash the next day beheld something curious: At the well in the courtyard the bay horse had his nose in the white hands of Panna Seninska, and when he was led, later on, to the stable, he looked back at her time after time, expressing with neighs his yearning. Lukash could not learn at the time the cause of this "confidence," for he was intent on loading a wagon; so it was some time after midday that he approached the young lady and said, with eyes glowing from emotion:

"Have you noticed one thing?"

"What?" asked the girl.

"That even a beast knows a real charm."

Panna Seninska forgot that he had seen her in the morning, and, noting a look of delight in his eyes, she raised her beautiful brows with astonishment, and said:

"What are you thinking about?"

"What?" repeated Lukash. "Yatzek's horse!"

"Oh, the horse!"

Saying this, she burst into laughter and ran from the porch to her room. He remained there, astonished and somewhat confused, understanding neither why she had run from him nor why she had suddenly burst out laughing.

Another week passed, and preparations were nearing completion; but somehow Pan Ciprianowicz was not urgent for the journey. He postponed it from day to day, improved various details, complained of the heat, and at last he fell under the influence of some alarming foreboding. The girl was eager to be out on the journey. The Bukoyemskis were growing uneasy, and at length Father Voinowski agreed that further delay was a loss of time without reason. But Pan Serafin argued:

"I have news that the King has not gone yet to Cracow and will not go soon. Meantime the troops are to meet there, but only in part, and no one knows the day of this meeting. I ordered Stanislav to send me a man every month, with a letter giving details as to where his regiment is quartered, when it is to start, and under whose orders. Seven weeks have passed and I have not heard anything from him. A letter may come to me now at any moment, hence my delay; and I am alarmed somewhat. Think not that we must find our young men at Cracow in

every case. It may happen that they will not be there at all."

"How is that?" inquired Panna Seninska, uneasily.

"The regiments need not necessarily march through Cracow. Wherever a regiment is, it can move straight from there; but where Pan Zbierzhkhowski may be at this time I know not. He may have been sent to the boundary of Silesia, or to the army of the grand hetman, who is coming from Russia. Regiments are often hurried from place to place, to train them in marching. In the course of seven weeks various orders may have come, of which Stanislav should have informed me; and, as he has not done it, I feel uneasy; there are frequent disputes and also duels in the camps. Perhaps something has happened. But, even if all is well, we ought to know where Stanislav's regiment is and where it is bound for."

All became gloomy at these words save Father Voinowski, who said:

"A regiment is not a needle, nor is it a button, which, if torn from a coat and lost in grass, is found with much difficulty. Do not worry; we shall learn of them in Cracow more quickly than we could here in Yedlina."

"But on the road we may miss the letter."

"Leave an order with Vilchopolski to send it after us. That is the right way. Meanwhile, in Cracow we will find the safest place possible for the lady, and then our minds will be free when we start for the second time."

"True! true!"

"This is my advice, then: If no letter comes till tomorrow, we will start in the cool of the evening for Radom, then farther to Keletz, Yendzheyev and Mekhow."

"Perhaps it would be better to start out the day after, at daybreak, so as not to pass in the night through those for-

ests; and thus we might avoid an ambush, if the Kshepetskis should make one."

"Oh, that's all right! Better go in the cool!" said Matvey Bukoyemski. "If they attack, they will do so as well in the day as at night, and now the nights are light."

He rubbed his hands gleefully, and the three others followed his example.

But Father Voinowski thought otherwise. He doubted that the Kshepetskis would venture to make an open attack.

"Martsian might, perhaps, venture, but the old man is too sensible for that; he knows too well what such a deed may mean, and how much men have suffered for *raptus puellae*! Besides, against the power of our party Martsian could reckon on victory, while, on the other hand, he could reckon on vengeance from Yatzek and Stanislav."

The delight of the Bukoyemskis was spoiled by the priest's words; but they were soothed by Vilchopolski, who began to argue, and strike the floor with his wooden leg, and shake his head, saying:

"Even if you meet no danger up to Radom, to Keletz, or even to Mekhow, I advise you to neglect no precaution till you reach the gates of Cracow; for there are forests everywhere along the road, and I know Martsian better than you do. I am almost convinced that that devil is now planning some mischief."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

At last the day of departure arrived. The party left Yedlina at daybreak, under a cloudless sky. Besides the leather-covered carriage intended for Panna Seninska and Pani Dzvонkowski, and Father Voinowski, in case his old wound should not allow him to stay in the saddle, there were three well-laden wagons, each of which was drawn by four horses; and each had three men, including the driver. Behind Pan Serafin Ciprianowicz six men on horseback, dressed in turquoise-colored clothes, led reserve horses. The priest had two attendants, each of the Bukoyemskis also two; only the forester rode alone, guarding the wagon with the trunks. Thus thirty-four men, well armed with swords and with muskets, started out on the long journey. It is true that, in case of an attack, some of the men could not participate in the defense, for they would have to guard the wagons and the horses; but the Bukoyemskis felt convinced that even with such numbers they could go through the whole world, and that it would not be well for even a stronger party to attack them. Their hearts flared up with so much joy that they could hardly stay in their saddles. There was a time when they showed their better side in a skirmish with Tartars and Cossacks, but that was of no consequence; and later, when they had settled down in the forest, their youth passed away in watching the other foresters and in killing bears, which they were to preserve for the King, and in sprees at Kozenitsi, Radom and Pshitik.

And only now, when they all rode stirrup to stirrup, to the great war against the immense forces of the Turks, they felt that this was their true destination, that the life they had led before was a shameless and worthless life, and that only now they were starting to live the real and useful life for which God the Father had created the Polish nobles, God the Son redeemed them, and the Holy Ghost sanctified them. They could neither think this out clearly, nor could they express it in words, for they had never been too strong in those things; but they felt like shouting for joy. It seemed to them the party was not moving fast enough. They felt like letting their horses rush away like a whirlwind toward that great destination, to the great war between the Poles and the pagans, to the triumph of the cross over the crescent, to glorious death, to eternal glory! They felt that they had become loftier, purer, worthier and nobler in their nobility. They scarcely thought now of Martsian Kshepetski and his rioting company, of ambushes and barriers. All this now seemed to them so small, so insignificant.

They felt that if whole legions now stood in their way they would have ridden across them like a tempest; they would have crossed over their corpses and would have resumed their journey. Their inborn leonine passions were aroused, and their warlike, knightly blood now began to play within them so vigorously that if they had been ordered all alone to attack the whole bodyguard of the Sultan they would not have hesitated one moment to charge.

Similar feelings—and founded, moreover, on old recollections—filled the hearts of Pan Ciprianowicz and Father Voinowski. The priest had passed the best years of his youth on the field with either a sword or a spear in his hand. He remembered a whole series of defeats and victories. He remembered the terrible revolt of Khmel'nitski,

Zholtiya Vodi, Korsun, Pilavtsi, the famous Zbazazh and the great battle at Berestechko. He remembered the Swedish invasion and the endless attacks of the Rakochi. He had been in Denmark when the triumphant people, not satisfied with the massacre and expulsion of the Swedes from their country, pursued them with the invincible regiments of Charnetski to the distant sea; he had participated in the battle in which Khovanski and Dolgoruki were defeated; he had known the most famous men and the greatest knights; he had been a pupil of the immortal Volodiewski; he had loved war, battles and bloodshed; but all that had lasted only until his heart was broken with personal misfortune, and he became a priest. Since then he had changed completely, and when, facing the people at church, he said, "Peace be with you!" he believed that he was uttering the greatest commandment of Christ, and that any war, being opposed to that commandment, was a sin against mercy and a stain on Christian nations. But there was one exception—a war against Turkey. "God put the Polish people on horseback and, turning their breasts eastward, defined their mission and showed them His will," he said. "He knew wherefore He had chosen us and put others behind our shoulders; thus, if we wish to fulfill our mission as well as His command properly, we must stand like a rock against this sea and break the waves with our breasts." And Father Voinowski believed that God had purposely placed on the throne a king who, while yet a hetman, had shed so much pagan blood, so that his hand might deliver the last blow to those pagan forces and avert ruin from Christendom forever. It seemed to him that now the great day had come for the fulfillment of God's will, and he looked upon this war as upon a great crusade; and he was glad that age, toil and his wounds had not bent him to the

ground completely, that he was still able to participate in this war.

He would still be able to go around the regiments; he, an old soldier of Christ, would spur his horse and, with a crucifix in his hand, would rush into the thick of the battle, with so much faith in his heart that right after him and the crucifix a thousand spears would pierce the bodies of the pagans, a thousand swords would strike their skulls.

Finally, thoughts of another kind came to his mind, like an echo of the earlier thoughts. He could hold the crucifix in his left hand and a sword in his right hand. As a priest he could not lift the sword against Christian warriors, but against the Turks! That is not a sin, it is really not a sin! He would show the younger men how to extinguish the pagan lights, how to mow down the pagan warriors; he would show them what kind of warriors there had been in former days.

People had wondered at his skill on more than one battle-field; perhaps His Majesty the King might even now notice his skill and admire it. And this thought filled him with such intense joy that he lost the thread in his rosary: "Holy Mary!—Strike, kill!—Rejoice, merciful Mary!—At them!—The Lord is with thee!—Slay!" But he recovered at last. "Tfu! The devil take it! Earthly glory is as smoke! What fly has bitten me? *Non nobis, non nobis! Sed nomine Tuo!*" And he passed the beads through his fingers more attentively.

Pan Serafin was also saying the morning prayers; but from time to time he looked now at the priest, now at the young lady, now at the Bukoyemskis, who were riding at their sides; now at the trees and the meadows, bathed in dew. Finally, when he had said the last prayer, he turned to the old man, heaved a deep sigh, and said:

"It seems to me that you are filled with good hopes."

"And you, too," replied the priest.

"True. Before starting there is always some care and trouble; but no sooner does the free wind begin to blow around you than your heart grows light. I remember how we were marching to Khotim, some ten years ago; all the people were seized with such eagerness that, though it was in the cold November weather, more than one removed his coat because of the heat that came direct from the heart. Well, God, who gave us then a great victory, will give it to us again, for the leader is the same, and the valor has not subsided. I have heard people praise the Swedish army, the French, even the Germans; but against Turks there are no better soldiers than ours."

"I have heard His Majesty the King say the same," replied the priest. "'The Germans,' said he, 'stand well under fire, but when they attack they close their eyes; but I am satisfied with my soldiers. If they meet the enemy nose to nose, they are sure to sweep everything before them as no cavalry in the world.' And that is true. Lord Jesus has rewarded us liberally with this power—not only the nobles, but even the peasants. Take our field infantry, for instance: when they spit on their palms and take up their muskets, the best of the Yanichars cannot hold their ground against them. Both of us have seen it more than once."

"If God will only keep Stanislav and Yatzek in good health I am sure that they will participate in the first battle against the Turks. But against whom, do you think, will the Turks direct their greatest forces?"

"In my opinion, against the Emperor, for he has long been waging war against them, and has encouraged the Hungarian rebels; but the Turkish army is big enough to be divided into two, or even three, and therefore we cannot tell where we will have a general engagement."

"That is undoubtedly the reason why no general camp has been organized, and the regiments go from one place to another, according to reports. Some regiments, under Yablonowski's command, are stationed near Trembovli; others are concentrating toward Cracow; still others, wherever they are needed. I do not know where the commander of Volinia is at present, nor where Zbierzhkowski's regiment is stationed. Sometimes it seems to me that Stanislaw has not written all this time because, perhaps, his regiment is moving toward these parts."

"If the regiment is ordered to go to Cracow, it will surely march near us; it all depends on where it was before. Perhaps we will hear some news at Radom. Our first night halt will be at Radom, will it not?"

"Yes. I should like to have the prelate see the girl and give us definite advice. Besides, he will give us letters to Cracow with regard to her affairs."

The conversation stopped for a minute; then Pan Ciprianowicz lifted his eyes to Father Voinowski again and asked:

"But what do you think will happen should she meet Yatzek in Cracow?"

"I don't know whether they will meet or not. All will happen as God pleases. Yatzek might re-establish himself in his estate by marriage, while she is as poor as a Turkish saint. Wealth by itself is nonsense, but when it is a question of the splendor of a family——"

"But she is also a descendant of a famous family. The girl is like pure gold; and, besides, there is not the slightest doubt that they love each other madly."

"Oh, madly!"

It was clear that he did not feel like speaking on this subject, for he immediately turned the conversation into a different direction.

"Let us better bear in mind that a robber is hankering after that gold. Do you remember what Volchopolski said?"

Pan Serafin cast a glance at the forest, and said:

"The Kshepetskis will not dare! They will not dare! There is quite a number of us here, and see how calm it is around us. I wanted the girl to ride in the carriage for safety, but she begged to be allowed to ride on horseback. She is not afraid of anything."

"Well, she has good blood," muttered the priest. "But I notice that she masters you completely."

"Eh! And you, too, somewhat, it seems," replied Ciprianowicz; "but, as for me, I own it openly. When she begs me for something, especially when she blinks her eyes, how can I refuse her? Women have various schemes. Have you noticed that she has a peculiar way of blinking and folding her arms? When we come near Belchonchki I will tell her to go into the carriage; but now she wishes to be on horseback, because it is healthier, she says."

"It is surely healthier in weather like this."

"Just look how rosy she is, just like a strawberry!"

"What matters it to me whether she is rosy or not?" replied the priest. "But we have a wonderful day."

And, indeed, the weather was wonderful; the morning fresh and dewy. Single drops on the pine-needles gleamed in rainbow colors, like diamonds. The forest of hazel-trees was bright in the morning sunshine. Orioles were merrily twittering. There was an odor of pine in the air, and the whole earth seemed to smile with gladness to the sun in the azure, cloudless sky.

Thus moving ahead, they finally reached the same tarpit near which the Bukoyemskis had caught Martsian Kshepetski not long ago. The fear that some people might be lurking in ambush there proved groundless. Near the

well were only two peasants' wagons, laden with tar. The drivers stood near their wretched little horses and ate bread and cheese; but when they caught sight of the approaching party they hid away their food; when asked whether they had seen armed men around there, they answered that a mounted man had been waiting there since morning, and that as soon as he noticed the approaching party from afar he galloped away at full speed in the opposite direction.

Pan Serafin became alarmed when he heard this. It seemed to him that the man must have been sent out by Kshepetski as a scout; and, as the leader, he doubled his watchfulness. He ordered two attendants to ride to both sides of the road, to examine the forest. He sent two others ahead, with instructions to fire their muskets if they should see an armed band, and to return to the wagons as fast as possible. But an hour passed without any alarm. The party moved forward slowly, looking carefully on all sides; but all was quiet in the forest. Only the orioles whistled as before, and the hammering of the little blacksmiths of the forest, the woodpeckers, resounded. At last the party came out on a wide plain, where Pan Ciprianowicz and the priest insisted that Panna Seninska dismount and enter the carriage, for they were nearing Belchonchki. The house could already be seen among the trees. Panna Seninska looked with emotion at the house in which so many of the best as well as the worst years of her life had been spent. She wanted to see Virombki, but the Belchonchki linden-trees obstructed it from view completely. And somehow it came to her mind that perhaps she would never again see those places. She sighed softly and grew sad.

The Bukoyemskis looked at the house and at the village with a challenging air; but deep calm reigned everywhere. On the wide pastures, which were bathed in sunshine, cows

and sheep were grazing, guarded by dogs and groups of children; here and there were flocks of geese; and, were it not for the summer heat, one might have mistaken them for patches of snow on the hill slopes. Otherwise the region seemed empty.

Pan Ciprianowicz, who lacked not the daring of a knight, wishing to show the Kshepetskis that he regarded them with contempt, ordered to halt there, to give the horses a rest. And the whole party stopped by the fields of wheat, which was slightly rustling and bending to the ground, amidst the silence of the plain, which was broken from time to time by the snorting of horses.

"Your health! Your health!" answered the servants.

Yan, the youngest of the Bukoyemskis, was displeased with this calm. He turned toward the mansion and, flourishing his hands, began to call the absent Kshepetskis:

"Well, come out here, you dogs! Show us your phiz, Stump; we'll cut you to pieces with our swords!"

Then he leaned over to the carriage.

"You see, young lady," he said, "neither Martsian, with his band, nor the tramps of the forest are in a hurry to attack us now!"

"Do the tramps also attack?" asked the girl.

"Of course! but not us. There are many of them in the forests all along the road to Cracow. If His Majesty the King would pardon all their crimes, there would be enough tramps around here to form two regiments."

"I should prefer to meet these tramps than Pan Martsian Kshepetski's company. The people in Belchonchki told terrible stories about his company. I have never heard of tramps attacking a house."

"That's because a bandit has the same sense as a wolf. You must remember that a wolf never kills sheep or other cattle in the neighborhood where his lair is."

"Of course! That's true!" declared the other brothers. Yan, encouraged by the praise, continued:

"A bandit will never attack a village or a house near the forest where he lives, for the simple reason that if the neighboring people should take up arms and start in pursuit after him, they, being familiar with the forest and all its secret places, would catch him easily. That is why the tramps make attacks in distant places or hold up travelers."

"And they are not afraid?"

"They are not afraid of God; why should they be afraid of men?"

But Panna Seninska was now thinking of something else, and when Pan Serafin came alongside of the carriage she blinked and said, imploringly:

"Why should I sit in the carriage, since no attack threatens us? Allow me to go on horseback, please!"

"What for?" replied Pan Serafin. "The sun is high; it would burn your face. I know that somebody would not like that."

When the girl heard this she quickly withdrew to the depth of the carriage, and Pan Ciprianowicz turned to the brothers:

"Am I not telling the truth?"

But the brothers, who were not at all quick-witted, did not understand what he was referring to, and they began to inquire:

"Who's that? Who's that?"

Pan Ciprianowicz merely shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

"The Bishop of Cracow, the Emperor of Germany and the King of France."

Then he gave a sign, and the party started.

They passed Belchonchki, and moved along the tilled fields, the meadows and the pastures, bordered at the hori-

zon by a blue strip of forest. They halted at Yedlina for another rest, and the local brewers, the citizens and the peasants took leave of Father Voinowski, and the party reached Radom only toward evening.

Martsian Kshepetski had not shown the slightest sign of life. Pan Ciprianowicz learned that Martsian had been drinking heavily with his company at Radom on the previous day, but that they had returned home at night. All heaved a sigh of relief, supposing that no danger threatened them any longer on the journey.

The prelate Tvorkowski gave them letters to Father Gatski, to the Vice-Chancellor Gninski, who, it was known, was getting together a regiment at his own cost, and to Pan Matchinski. The prelate was very glad to see Panna Seninska, Father Voinowski and Pan Ciprianowicz, whom he appreciated for his knowledge of Latin and of many quotations and various maxims. When told of Martsian Kshepetski's threats, he was not at all alarmed, and paid no special attention to them, thinking that if he really had intentions to attack the party, the attack would have been made near Kozeniz, which was a spot more favorable for such purpose than the forests along the road from Radom to Keletz. "The young fellow will not attack you," he said to Ciprianowicz, "and the old man will bring no lawsuit against you, for then he would have to deal with me, and I have some weapons against him besides Pongowski's will." The prelate kept the guests all day at his house, and let them start only toward evening. As all obstacles had apparently been removed, Pan Ciprianowicz agreed to travel at night, all the more so since the sun was unbearably hot in the daytime.

The first few miles, however, they passed while it was still light. Beginning at the River Oronka, which formed swamps here and there, immense pine forests, surrounding Oronsk, Sukhaya and Krogulchya, extended to Shidlowets,

to Mzochow and Bzin, all the way down to Keletz. The party was moving ahead slowly, for the old road lay now over sandy hillocks, over muddy water-gauges and swamps. These places enjoyed no good repute, but Pan Ciprianowicz, confident of his strength, paid no attention to that; and he was satisfied that they were traveling while the people were not troubled by the heat and the horses were not annoyed by the flies.

Father Voinowski began to sing the evening prayer, others joined him, and thus they continued until the earth was completely shrouded in darkness. The priest, the Bukoyemskis and Pan Serafin talked for a while; then they began to doze, and soon they were sound asleep.

They heard neither the exclamations of the drivers, nor the snorting of the horses, nor the splashing sounds produced by the hoofs of the horses striking the mud as they were passing the reed-covered swamps, which they had reached by midnight. The sleepers were awakened by the shouting of the man who was riding in advance:

“Stop! stop!”

All opened their eyes. The Bukoyemskis straightened themselves in their saddles and galloped ahead briskly.

“What’s the matter there?”

“The road is blocked! There’s a ditch across it, and a breastwork beyond the ditch.”

The swords of the Bukoyemskis were drawn as fast as lightning and flashed in the air.

“To arms! An ambuscade!”

In an instant Pan Ciprianowicz appeared before the ambuscade, and all became clear to him—it was impossible to make a mistake. A broad ditch had been dug, and beyond the ditch lay a heap of pine-trees. The people who had thus blocked the road had evidently intended to let the party in on the ridge, whence there was no escape on either side, and then attack from the rear.

"Hold your guns and muskets ready!" thundered Father Voinowski. "They are coming!"

And, indeed, some hundred feet away, dark, strange, square figures, unlike human beings, appeared on the ridge and were advancing quickly to the wagons.

"Fire!" commanded the priest.

A report resounded, and bright strips of fire rent the curtain of the darkness. Of the attacking group, only one sank to the ground, while the others were now running faster toward the wagons, and behind them denser groups were now seen more distinctly.

Experienced by many years in matters of war, Father Voinowski understood at once that the people were carrying bundles of reeds, willows or straw, and that was why the first discharge had such insignificant results.

"Fire! In turns! Four at a time! At their knees!" he cried.

Two of the attendants had their guns loaded with grape-shot. Thus, taking their places beside the others, they fired at the knees of the attacking band. An outcry of pain resounded, and this time a whole row of bundles sank down on the muddy ridge; but the men in the rows behind jumped over those that had fallen and advanced still nearer to the wagons.

"Fire!" came the third command.

Another report was heard, and this time with still more effect, for the advance was stopped for a minute, and the crowd was apparently confused.

The priest gained ever more courage, for he understood that the attackers had outwitted themselves in their choice of a position. It is true that in case of victory not a living soul would escape from their hands, and that must have been their intention; but, on the other hand, being unable to attack the party from all sides, they had to attack only from the ridgeway—that is, in narrow rows—which made

defense quite easy. Thus five or six courageous and strong men could ward off the attack all night long.

The attackers also began to fire, but their guns must have been poor, for they caused but little damage. At their first discharge they struck only one horse and wounded a stableman in the hip. Then the Bukoyemskis begged to be permitted to charge alone against the enemy, guaranteeing that they would sweep them off right and left into the swamps, and those that would not be swept off would be trampled in the mud. But the priest, leaving this proposition for the last, did not allow them to attack, but ordered them, as expert marksmen, to shoot from a distance, and Pan Ciprianowicz was to keep a sharp watch on the ditch and the breastwork.

"If they attack us from that side," he said, "they can't do anything to us. They will not get us cheaply, anyway."

Then he hurried over to the carriage, in which were Panna Seninska and Pani Dzvonski. They were both praying softly, without great fear.

"Never mind!" said the priest. "Have no fear!"

"We have no fear," replied the girl; "but I should like to be on horseback."

Her words were interrupted by a volley. The confused bandits were again pushing onward with a strange, blind daring, for it was clear that they could hardly succeed on that side.

"If not for the women," thought the priest, "we might attack them ourselves."

And he was considering whether he should not allow the Bukoyemskis to charge with four strong and courageous attendants; but at this moment he cast a glance on the side and shuddered.

Crowds appeared on both sides, and, leaping from hillock to hillock, or over the bundles of reeds and branches which they had spread before them, they were advancing to the wagons.

The priest immediately turned to them two ranks of attendants; but at the same time he realized the extent of the threatening danger. Now their party seemed surrounded on the three sides. True, the attendants had been carefully chosen; but they were not sufficient in number, especially since some of them had to guard the reserve horses. It was becoming clear that after the first fire, which would do but little damage to the numerous attackers, before the guns could be loaded again there would be a hand-to-hand struggle, in which the weaker side would be defeated.

There was but one thing left—to break through along the ridgeway; that is, to leave the wagons, to order the Bukoyemskis to sweep everything before them, and to start ahead, leaving the women in the center, among the horses. So, while they were shooting right and left, the priest ordered the ladies to mount their horses, and he formed ranks for an attack. The Bukoyemskis were in the first rank, behind them six attendants, then Panna Seninska and Pani Dzvонkowski; at the sides the priest and Pan Serafin, behind them eight attendants, four in a row. After the attack and retreat from the ridgeway the old man intended to reach the first village, collect all the peasants and return for the wagons left behind.

But he hesitated a while, and only when the attackers came within several feet of the sides of the ridgeway, and when wild cries resounded from behind the breastwork, he commanded:

“Strike!”

“Strike!” roared the Bukoyemskis, and, like a hurricane which destroys all in its way, they rushed forward. On reaching the enemy the horses rose on their hind legs and cut through the dense crowd, crushing the bandits, pushing them off into the swamps, sweeping away entire rows of people, and working with their swords mercilessly, unceas-

ingly. Cries rent the air, and the splashing of bodies as they fell into the swamps below was heard, while they pressed forward, waving their hands like a windmill driven by a strong wind. Some of the bandits leaped into the swamps to save themselves from the terrible riders, others met them with forks and hunting-poles. Heavy clubs were raised against the Bukoyemskis; but the Bukoyemskis again made their horses rise on their hind legs, and, smashing everything before them, they rode on like a tempest over a young forest.

And were it not for the narrowness of the road, and for the fact that the wounded did not know where to escape, that the people behind pushed those in front of them, the Bukoyemskis would undoubtedly have passed the whole ridgeway. But, as more than one bandit preferred battle to drowning, the battle continued for some time, and even grew fiercer. The bandits became desperately enraged. They were now fighting not merely for plunder, or for the sake of capturing somebody, but out of furious madness. When the cries subsided for a moment the gnashing of teeth and cursing were heard. At last the onrush of the Bukoyemskis was checked. Then it occurred to them that perhaps they would have to die. And when they suddenly heard before them the tramping of horses and loud exclamations in the neighboring thicket, the four brothers felt sure that the moment of death was nearing, and they began to flourish their swords more desperately, so as not to sell life too cheaply.

Suddenly something unusual happened. Voices behind the bandits shouted, "Strike!" and scores of swords flashed in the moonlight. Certain horsemen began to slash and cut the attackers from the rear, and the bandits, taken unawares, were seized with indescribable terror. The ridgeway was now closed to them, and there was no escape for them except in the swamps. Only very few offered resistance

now; the others, like ducks, leaped to the right or to the left into the swamps. The bandits clutched at reeds or at grass, or stretched themselves on their bellies, so as not to sink at once.

Only one small group, armed with scythes attached to poles, held their ground for some time, defending themselves desperately. Several horsemen were wounded; but soon this small group, also, realized that there was no hope for them; so they dropped their weapons, sank down on their knees and implored for mercy. They were taken alive as witnesses.

Then the riders from both sides stopped and immediately began to speak.

"Halt! Halt! Who are you?"

"And who are you?"

"Ciprianowicz of Yedlina!"

"My God! These are our people!"

And two horsemen immediately came forward from the ranks. One of them bent down to Pan Ciprianowicz, clasped his hand and began to kiss it, and the other horseman rushed into the priest's embrace.

"Stanislav!" "Yatzek!"

The embraces and the greetings lasted for a long time; Pan Ciprianowicz was the first to come to himself.

"For heaven's sake, how do you come here?" he asked.

"Our regiment is going to Cracow. Yatzek and I took a leave of absence, in order to go to Yedlina; but at Radom we learned that you and Father Voinowski and the Bukoyemskis had set out an hour earlier along the road toward Keletz."

"Did the prelate, Father Tvorkowski, tell it to you?"

"No; some Radom Jews told us. We did not see the prelate at all. When we heard that, we did not go to Yedlina, but started out together with the regiment, knowing that we would meet you. Suddenly, at midnight, we heard

firing; so we rushed to give aid, thinking that robbers were attacking some travelers. But it never occurred to us that you would be attacked. Thank God, thank God that we came just in time!"

"We were not attacked by robbers, but by the Kshepetskis. They wanted to capture Panna Seninska, and she is with us."

"My God!" exclaimed Stanislav; "Yatzek will die for grief."

"I wrote you about her, but it seems the letter has not reached you."

"We have been marching almost three weeks already. That is why I have not written to you of late; I was coming to see you."

Exclamations of joy, uttered by the Bukoyemskis, the attendants and the soldiers, interrupted the conversation. At that moment other attendants came running, with lighted torches in their hands. It became light on the ridgeway, as though it were daylight; and by this light Tachewski saw a gray horse, and upon it Panna Seninska.

He became as petrified when he noticed her; and Father Voinowski, seeing the young man's embarrassment, said:

"Yes, yes; she is also with us."

Then Yatzek moved forward, halted his horse before the girl; he bared his head, and remained there as stunned, speechless, breathless, his face as white as chalk.

But a minute later his cap fell from his hand to the ground and his head bent down on the horse's mane.

"But he is wounded!" exclaimed Lukash Bukoyemski.

## CHAPTER XXV.

YATZEK was really wounded. One of the bandits who defended themselves most desperately struck him with a scythe on the left shoulder; and, since he marched without an armor, the edge had cut into his body rather deeply from the shoulder to the elbow. The wound was not serious, but it bled quite profusely, and that is why the young man had fainted. The experienced Father Voinowski commanded to put him in a wagon, and when the wound had been dressed he left him in care of the women. Soon Yatzek opened his eyes and again began to look at Panna Seninska, who was bending over him; he gazed at her face as though at a holy image.

Meanwhile the attendants filled the ditch and removed all obstructions. Ciprianowicz's party and the soldiers passed to the dry road beyond, where they halted to bring the train into order, take some rest and question the prisoners. From Tachewski the priest went to the Bukoyemskis, to see if nothing ill had befallen them. But they were well. The horses had suffered, but not seriously. The men themselves were in excellent humor, for all were admiring their valor, saying that they had all crushed before war more opponents than many a soldier kills during the war.

"Now, gentlemen, you ought to join Zbierzhkhowski," said several officers. "It has long been known—and God grant that men will see soon!—that our regiment is the

first even among hussars. That is why Pan Zbierzhkhowski admits no one but worthy knights; but he will accept you, and we shall be delighted to have you in our company."

The Bukoyemskis knew that they could not join them, because they had not the means demanded in such a high regiment; but they listened to these speeches with rapture, and when the cups were passed from hand to hand they let no man surpass them in that line, either.

While this was going on the captured bandits were seized by their heads and dragged from the mud and brought before Pan Zbierzhkhowski and the priest and Pan Serafin. No bandits had escaped, for, with a detachment of twelve hundred, there were men to surround the whole quagmire and both ends of the ridgeway. The appearance of the prisoners astonished Pan Serafin. He had thought to find Martsian among them, as he had told Stanislav, and Martsian's Radom outcasts, also; meanwhile he saw before him a ragged rabble reeking with turf and bespattered with mud of the ridgeway—a company made up, like all bodies of that kind, of deserters from the infantry, of runaway servants and serfs; in a word, of all kinds of wicked, wild scoundrels, working at robbery in remote places and forests. Many such parties were raging, especially in the wooded region of Sandomir; and, since they were strengthened by men who were eager for anything—men who, if captured, were threatened with terrible punishment—their attacks were uncommonly daring, and they fought savage battles.

While the search in the swamps was continued, Pan Serafin turned to Zbierzhkhowski and said:

"Gracious colonel, these are highway robbers. We thought them quite different. This was an attack of common bandits. We thank you and all your men for your kind assistance, without which we might not have seen the sun rise this morning."

"I like these night marches," said Zbierzhkhowski, smiling. "The heat does not trouble you, and it is possible to serve others. Do you wish to question these captives immediately?"

"Now that I have looked at them closely, I find it unnecessary. The court in the town will examine them, and the hangman will do the rest."

At this, a tall, bony peasant, with a gloomy face and light hair, came forward from among the captives, and said, as he bent to Pan Ciprianowicz's stirrup:

"Noble lord, spare our lives, and we will tell the truth. We are common bandits, but the attack was not in the ordinary way."

The priest and Pan Ciprianowicz, on hearing this, looked at each other.

"Who are you?" asked the priest.

"I am the chief. There were two of us, for this party was formed of two bands; but the other man was killed. Pardon us, and we will tell everything."

The priest thought for a moment.

"We cannot save you from justice," said he, "but for you it is better in every case to tell the truth than be forced to declare it under torture. If you tell the truth, God's judgment and man's may be more lenient."

The peasant looked at his companions, uncertain whether to speak or be silent. Meanwhile the priest added:

"And if you tell the whole truth we will commend you to the mercy of the King. He needs good soldiers now and recommends mercy now to judges."

"In that case," said the man, "I will tell everything. My name is Obukh; the leader of the other band was Kos, and a noble engaged both of us to attack your graces."

"But do you know the name of that noble?"

"I did not know him, for I am from distant places; but Kos knew him and said his name was Vish."

The priest and Pan Ciprianowicz looked at each other with astonishment.

"What did you say? Vish?"

"Yes."

"But was there no one with him?"

"There was another man; he was lean, thin, young."

Pan Serafin turned to the priest and whispered:

"They."

"Or perhaps Martsian's company?"

Then he said aloud to the peasant:

"What did they order you to do?"

"This is what he said: 'Do what you like with the people; the wagons and plunder are yours; but in the party there is a young lady, whom you are to take and bring by roundabout ways between Radom and Zvolenye to Polichna. Near Polichna our party will attack you and the lady. You will pretend to defend her, but do it so as not to harm our men. For this you will get a thaler apiece, besides what you find in the wagons.'"

"That is as clear as if on one palm," said the priest.

A moment later he asked again:

"Did only those two talk with you?"

"Later at night a third person came with them; he gave us a ducat each as earnest money. Though the place was as dark as in a cellar, one of our men recognized that third person as Pan Kshepetski."

"Ha! That is he!" exclaimed Pan Ciprianowicz.

"And is that man here, or not?" inquired the priest.

"Here!" replied a voice from some distance.

"Come over nearer. You recognized Pan Kshepetski? How did you recognize him, since it was pitch-dark?"

"Because I have known him from childhood on. I knew

him by his bow-legs and his head, which sits as between two humps, and by his voice."

"Did he speak to you?"

"He spoke to us, and afterward I heard him speak to those who came with him."

"What did he say to them?"

"He said this: 'If it had been a question of money, I would not have come, even if the night were darker.' "

"And will you testify to this before the Mayor in the town, or before the Starost in court?"

"I will."

Pan Zbierzhkowski heard this, and, turning to his attendants, said:

"Look after this man with special care."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THEN they began to consider the matter. The Bukoyemskis suggested that some peasant woman be dressed up as a lady, put on horseback, surrounded with attendants and soldiers dressed up as bandits, and taken to the place appointed by Martsian, and when Martsian made the attack, as agreed upon, they should surround him immediately, and either wreak vengeance on him there, or take him to Cracow and deliver him to justice. They offered to go themselves at the head of the party, and swore that they would throw Martsian at the feet of Panna Seninska.

This proposal pleased all at the first moment; but when they examined it more carefully, the execution seemed difficult—almost impossible. Pan Zbierzhkhowski might rescue from danger people whom he met on his march, but he had no right to send soldiers on private expeditions, and he had no wish, either, to do so. On the other hand, since there was a bandit who knew and was ready to indicate to the courts the chief instigator of the ambush, it was possible to bring him to account at any moment and to have issued against him a sentence of infamy. For this reason both Pan Serafin and Father Voinowski grew convinced that there would be time for that after the war, since there was no fear that the Kshepetskis, who owned large estates, would flee and abandon them. This did not please the Bukoyemskis; they even declared that, since that was the decision, they would go themselves, with their attendants,

for Martsian; but Pan Ciprianowicz would not allow this. But they felt content when Yatzek implored them by all that was sacred to leave Kshepetski to him alone.

"I," said he, "will not sue Martsian; but, if all that I have heard is true, if I do not fall in the war, I swear, by God, that I will find the man, and it will be shown whether the verdict of the court would not be pleasanter and easier than that which will meet him."

And his "maiden" eyes glittered so fiercely that, though the Bukoyemskis were unterrified warriors, a shiver went through them. They knew well in what a strange manner anger and mildness were intertwined in the spirit of Yatzek, together with an ominous remembrance of injustice.

He repeated several times, "Woe to him! woe to him!" and again he grew pale from the loss of blood. It was day-break now, and the morning light had tinted the world in pink and green colors; that light sparkled in the dewdrops, on the grass and the reeds, and on the tree-leaves and the needles of dwarf pines here and there on the edge of the quagmire. Pan Zbierzhkhowski had commanded the captive bandits to bury the bodies of their fallen comrades, which was done very quickly, for the turf opened under spades easily; and, when no trace of battle was left on that ridgeway, the march was continued toward Shidlovets.

Pan Ciprianowicz advised Panna Seninska to sit again in the carriage, where she might have a good sleep before they reached the next halting place; but she was so resolute in her decision not to desert Yatzek that even Father Voynowski did not try to dissuade her. So they went together, only two besides the driver. Pani Dzvonkowski felt so tired and sleepy that she soon went into the carriage.

Yatzek lay, face upward, on bundles of straw arranged lengthwise in one side of the wagon, while Panna Seninska sat on the other, bending frequently toward his wounded

arm and watching to see if blood were not coming through the bandages. From time to time she put a leather bottle of old wine to his lips. The wine seemed to have a good effect on him, for after a while he was wearied of lying, and he ordered the driver to draw out the bundle on which his feet were resting.

"I prefer to ride sitting," said he, "since I feel perfectly well now."

"But the wound? Will it not pain you more?"

Yatzek turned his eyes to her rosy face, and said, in a sad and low voice: "Many years ago King Loketsk saw one of his knights pierced with spears by the Knights of the Cross on a battlefield, and he asked him whether he was suffering greatly. The knight showed his wound then and replied: 'This pains least of all.' "

Panna Seninska lowered her eyelashes.

"But what pains you more?" she whispered.

"A longing heart, and separation, and the memory of wrongs inflicted."

Silence reigned for a minute; but their hearts began to throb faster and faster every moment, for they knew that the time had come then in which they could and should confess everything which each had against the other.

"It is true," said the girl, "I wronged you when, after the duel, I received you with angry face and altogether inhumanly. But that was the only time, and God alone knows how much I regretted that afterward. Still, I say it is my fault, and from the depth of my soul I beg your forgiveness."

Yatzek put his uninjured hand to his forehead.

"Not that," he said, "was the sharpest thorn; not that caused me the keenest suffering!"

"I know it was not that, but the letter from Pan Pon-

gowski. How could you suspect me of knowing the contents of the letter or having suggested them?"

And in a broken voice she began to tell him how it happened: how she had implored Pan Pongowski to make a step toward a sincere reconciliation; how he had promised to write a fatherly letter, but wrote entirely the opposite. Of this she learned only later from Father Voinowski. It showed later that Pan Pongowski had other plans, and that he wanted to separate them from each other forever.

The words of confession awakened in her recollections of the painful and bitter days she had lived through; her eyes were dimmed with tears, and from constraint and shame a deep blush came out on her cheeks.

"Did Father Voinowski," asked she, at last, "not write to you that I knew nothing, and that I could not even understand why I was thus repaid for my sincere feeling?"

"Father Voinowski," answered Yatzek, "only wrote me that you were going to marry Pan Pongowski."

"But did he not write that I consented to do so only out of misery, and out of gratitude to my guardian? For I knew not then how he had treated you; I only knew that I was despised and forgotten."

When Yatzek heard this he closed his eyes and began to speak with great sadness:

"Forgotten? My God! I was at Warsaw, I was at the King's court, I went with my regiment through the country; but whatever I did, and wherever I went, you never left my heart and my memory for even a single moment. You followed me as a man is followed by his shadow. And during sleepless nights, in hours of suffering and pain and exhaustion, I have more than once called to you: 'Have mercy! Go away! Let me forget you!' But you did not leave me at any time, either in the day or in the night, in the field or under a house roof. Only then I understood

that I could tear you from my heart only by tearing the heart itself from my bosom."

Here he stopped, for his voice was choked from emotion; but a minute later he continued:

"So, after that I often prayed: 'O God, grant me death on the battlefield, for Thou seest that it is impossible for me to attain her, and impossible for me to be without her!' And that was before I had hoped for the favor of seeing you again—you, the only one in the world—you, my love!"

He inclined toward her and bent his head on her shoulder.

"You," whispered he, "are as blood which gives life, as the sun in the sky. The mercy of God is upon me, that I see you once more. O beloved! beloved!"

And it seemed to her that Yatzek was singing some wonderful song. Her eyes were filled with a wave of tears, and a wave of happiness flooded her heart. Again there was silence between them; but the girl wept long, shedding tears of joy such as she had never known in her life till that morning.

"Yatzek," said she, at last, "why have we suffered so much?"

"God has rewarded us a hundredfold," he answered; and for the third time there was silence between them.

Only the wagons squeaked, making forward slowly over the wide, sandy road. Beyond the forest they came out into great fields bathed in sunlight; on those fields wheat was rustling, dotted richly with red poppies and blue star thistles. There was great calm in that region. Above fields on which the grain had been reaped here and there skylarks were soaring, lost in song, motionless; on the edges of the fields sickles glittered in the distance; from the remoter green pastures came the cries and songs of men herding cattle. And it seemed to both of them that the

wheat was rustling for their sake; that the poppies and the star thistles were blooming for their sake; that the larks were singing for their sake; that the calls of the herdsmen were uttered for their sake; that all the sunny peace about them and all those voices were simply repeating their happiness and peace.

They were roused from this sweet oblivion by Father Voinowski, who had approached the wagon unnoticed.

"How are you, Yatzek?" asked he.

Yatzek quivered and looked with shining eyes at him, as if just roused from sleep.

"What is it, benefactor?"

"I am asking you how you are."

"Eh! I will not be better in paradise!"

The priest looked closely, first at him, then at the girl.

"So that's what it is?" he said; and he immediately galloped back to the company.

But the delightful reality came upon them anew.

Yatzek looked at her for a long time, and said:

"I can't look long enough at you."

She lowered her eyes, smiled at the corners of her lips till it appeared in her rosy cheeks.

"But is not Panna Zbierzhkhowski better?"

Yatzek looked at her with amazement.

"What Panna Zbierzhkhowski?"

She made no answer; she simply laughed with a laugh which sounded like a silver bell.

When the priest had galloped to the company, the men, who loved Yatzek, began to ply him with questions:

"Well, how is it there? How is our wounded man?"

"He is no longer in this world!" replied Father Voinowski.

"O Lord! what has happened? What do you mean?"

"He is not in this world, for he says that he is in paradise. *Mulier!*" (a woman).

The Bukoyemskis, as men who understand all that is said to them in its literal sense, did not cease to look at the priest with astonishment, and, removing their caps, were just ready to say, "Eternal rest," when a general outbreak of laughter interrupted their pious thoughts and intention. But in that laughter of the company there was sincere good-will and sympathy for Yatzek. Some of the men had learned from Pan Stanislaw that he was an emotional knight, hence the words of the priest delighted them greatly.

Some one suggested to shout in their honor and wish them good health and good fortune.

In one moment, almost, the whole regiment had surrounded Yatzek and Panna Seninska. Loud voices thundered, "*Vivant! floreant!*" Others added, "*Crescite et multiplicamini!*" Whether Panna Seninska was really frightened by these cries, or rather, as an "insidious woman," she only feigned fright, Father Voinowski himself could not decide. It is enough that, pressing her fair head to the unwounded shoulder of Yatzek, she asked, confusedly:

"What is this, Yatzek? What are they doing?"

He embraced her, and replied:

"People are giving you away to me, dearest flower, and I take you."

"After the war?"

"Before the war."

"In God's name! why so soon?"

But it was evident that Yatzek had not heard this question, for, instead of replying, he said to her:

"Let us bow to the dear comrades for this good-will and thank them."

And they bowed toward both sides, which roused still greater enthusiasm among the knights.

Seeing the maiden's blushing face, which was as beautiful as the morning dawn, the warriors struck their thighs for admiration.

"By God!" cried some, "it is dazzling!"

"Even an angel would fall in love with her; what can a sinful man do?"

"It is no wonder that he was withering with sorrow."

And again hundreds of voices thundered more powerfully:

*"Vivant! crescant! floreant!"*

Thus shouting, they entered Shidlovets amidst clouds of golden dust. At the first moment the inhabitants were frightened, and, leaving their workshops and their stores, they ran to their houses. But on learning that those were exclamations of joy, not of anger, they rushed in a crowd to the street and followed the soldiers. The drums of the hussars were beaten, the trumpets and the horns sounded. The merriment became general. Even the Jews, who, through fear, had remained longer in their houses, shouted "*Vivant!*" though but few of them knew what was going on there.

And Tachewski said to Panna Seninska:

"Before the war! Before the war, even though I were to die an hour later."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"How is that?" asked the priest, during the dinner given in Yatzek's honor by his comrades. "We shall start in five or six days from now. Who knows?—you may die in the war. Is it worth while marrying just before starting for the battlefield? Would it not be better to wait for the happy ending of the war and then marry?"

When Yatzek's friends heard these sensible words they burst out laughing. Some of them clasped their sides; others cried in unison: "Oh, it is worth while, benefactor! And just because he may die it is all the more worth while."

Father Voinowski was somewhat angry; but the three hundred best men, Stanislav among them, insisted, and Yatzek himself would not hear of delay, so the wedding had to take place then. Their re-established relations with the court and the favor of the King and the Queen helped the matter considerably. The Queen extended an offer to protect the future Pani Tachewski until after the end of the war, and the King himself promised to be present at the wedding and to think of an appropriate dowry when affairs of the State did not occupy his mind so much. He knew that many estates belonging to the Seninskas had passed to the Sobieskis; he knew that many of his ancestors had become strong through them. So he now felt that he was greatly indebted to the orphan, whose beauty had also disposed him favorably toward her, and whose sad fate and sufferings had aroused in him compassion for her.

Pan Matchinski, an old friend of Father Voinowski, and also a friend of the King, promised to remind the King of the young lady after the war; for at the time when the fate of Europe and of Christendom was resting on the shoulders of Yan III. it would be a sacrilege to bother him with private affairs. This promise cheered Father Voinowski as much as though Yatzek had already received a "royal estate," for he knew that Pan Matchinski's word carried much weight and was sure of fulfillment. In fact, he was responsible for all the good which had come to Panna Seninska in Cracow. It was he who mentioned Father Voinowski to the King and the Queen; it was he who won the favor of the Queen for the young lady—the Queen, though fickle and somewhat capricious, showed her special friendship from the very first moment, something which was altogether unusual.

Through the protection of the court and the kind favor of the Bishop of Cracow a dispensation from banns was secured without difficulty. Before this, Pan Ciprianowicz had obtained a beautiful house for the young couple. There were so many civil and military officials of high rank in the city that it was difficult to find a good house unoccupied, and many a Voyevoda could not obtain so fine a lodging as that secured by Ciprianowicz for Yatzek. Stanislav decided that Yatzek should spend the few days before the war in a real paradise, as it were. He beautified the house with fresh flowers and tapestry; other comrades helped him cheerfully, each of them lending rugs, tapestry, carpets, or similar valuable articles, which were taken along even to war in wealthy regiments.

Everybody showed the young couple the greatest goodwill—everybody with the exception of the Bukoyemskis. During the first few days of their stay in Cracow the Bukoyemskis came twice a day to Stanislav and to Yatzek,

and to merchants at the inns, with whom officers of Prince Alexander's regiment drank frequently; but soon the four brothers disappeared as if they had been drowned. Father Voinowski was of the opinion that they were drinking somewhere in the suburbs of Cracow, where some servants had met them, and where mead and wine were cheaper than in the city; but after that no one knew anything of their whereabouts. The priest and the Ciprianowiczs were very angry, for they had done so much for them, and they should not have forgotten it.

"They may be splendid warriors," said Father Voinowski, "but they are fickle-minded fellows and unreliable. They must have found some wild company which is more to their taste than our company."

This supposition proved to be wrong, however, for on the eve of Yatzek's wedding, when his house was filled with friends who had come with presents and good wishes, the four Bukoyemskis made their appearance in their very best clothes. They looked calm, serious, and there was an air of mystery about them.

"Where have you been?" asked Pan Ciprianowicz.

"We have been hunting a wild beast!" replied Lukash.

"Be quiet!" cried Matvey, striking him on the side.

"Don't say a word until the time comes."

He glanced at Father Voinowski, at Pan Serafin and at Stanislav, and then, turning to Yatzek, coughed, to clear his throat, like a man preparing to speak at length.

"Well, go ahead; speak out, now!" urged the other Bukoyemskis.

But he stared at them, wide-eyed, and asked:

"How was it?"

"How? Have you forgotten?"

"I'm afraid I have."

"Hold on! I know!" cried Yan. "It began: 'Our most esteemed——' Go ahead!"

"Our most esteemed Pilate!——" began Matvey.

"Why 'Pilate'?" interrupted the priest. "Perhaps it is Pylades?"

"Benefactor, you've just guessed it right," exclaimed Yan. "As true as I live, it is Pylades."

"Our esteemed Pylades!" repeated Matvey, reassured; "though not the iron Boristhenes, but the golden Tagus were to flow in our region, we, having been exiled through attacks of savages, would have but our hearts filled with friendship to offer to you, nor could we honor this day properly by any offering of thanks——"

"You speak as though you were cracking nuts!" exclaimed Lukash, excitedly.

But Matvey kept on repeating:

"Properly—properly——"

He stopped, gazed at his brothers, winked to them to help him out; but they had also forgotten that which was to follow.

The Bukoyemskis began to frown, and those about them sneered. Noticing this, Pan Ciprianowicz resolved to come to their aid, and he asked:

"Who composed this speech for you?"

"Pan Gromika, of Pan Shumlanski's regiment," replied Matvey.

"There you are. A strange horse is likely to be more unruly than your own. So you had better embrace Yatzek now and tell him just what you want to say."

"That's the best way."

They embraced Yatzek, one after another; and then Matvey continued:

"Yatzek, we know that you are not Pilate, and you know that since our estates around Kiel were lost we are poor

fellows, we are naked. Here is all we can give, and accept even this with gratitude."

He handed to Yatzek some object tied around with a piece of red satin, and the three younger brothers repeated, earnestly:

"Accept it, Yatzus, accept it! accept it!"

"I accept, and may God reward you," replied Yatzek.

Saying this, he placed the object on the table and began to unfold the satin. Suddenly he started back, and cried:

"By God, it is the ear of a man!"

"But do you know whose ear it is? Martsian Kshepetski's!" thundered the brothers.

The astonishment of those present was so great that all maintained silence.

"Tfu!" cried Father Voinowski, at length. And, surveying the Bukoyemskis with a stern glance, he said, facing the eldest:

"Are you Turks to bring here the ears of beaten enemies? You are a disgrace to this Christian army and to all nobles. If Kshepetski deserved death, if he were a pagan, even then it would be a disgrace to do what you have done. Perhaps you have delighted Yatzek; but let me tell you that for this act of yours you should expect contempt, not gratitude. There is not a regiment in all the cavalry, or even in the infantry, which would accept such savages as comrades."

At this Matvey came forward and said, burning with rage:

"Here's gratitude! here's reward! here's justice! If a layman had said this to us, I would have cut off both his ears; but since a clergyman says this, let the Lord Jesus judge him and take the part of the innocent! You ask us, 'Are you Turks?' but I ask, 'Do you think that we cut off the ear of a dead man?' Brothers, innocent orphans, see

to what we have come! They make Turks of us, enemies of our own faith!"

His voice quivered, for his rage was now overcome with sorrow. The other brothers burst out crying, sorrowfully:

"They make Turks of us!"

"Enemies of our faith!"

"Base pagans!"

"Tell us, then, how it was," said Father Voinowski.

"Lukash cut off Martsian's ear in a duel."

"Was Kshepetski here?"

"He came to Cracow." "He was here five days." "He followed us!"

"Let one speak at a time. You speak, but to the point," said the priest, turning to Yan.

"An acquaintance of ours from the regiment of the Bishop of Soudomir," began Yan, the youngest, "somehow told us three days ago that he had seen a queer man in a dram-shop on Kazimir Street. 'He looked like a stump of a tree,' he said, 'with a big head resting between two humps; he had short, crooked legs, and he drank like a dragon. An uglier monkey I have not seen in all my life,' he said. And we, endowed by the Lord Jesus with quick perception, grasped everything in an instant, and exchanged glances. 'That must be Martsian Kshepetski!' we thought; and then we said to the man, 'Take us to the dram-shop!' and he took us. It was rather dark there; but we looked for some time, then we saw something black behind a table in the corner of the room. Lukash walked over to the table, and the man behind it soon saw stars before his eyes. 'Martsian!' he cried, grabbing him by the shoulder. We drew our swords. Kshepetski jumped back, but saw that there was no escape for him, because we blocked the doorway. But he jumped up again several times. 'Do you think I am

afraid?" he cried. "Come at me one by one, not all at once, unless you are murderers, not nobles!"

"The rascal!" interrupted the priest.

"Lukash asked him: 'What were you trying to do with us? You rascal, you hired a gang of cut-throats to attack us! We ought to turn you over to the hangman, but this is a shorter way!' Then he advanced toward him, and they began to strike each other. After the third or fourth blow we saw Kshepetski's head bent down on one side. I looked, and there was an ear on the ground. Matvey picked it up at once, and cried: 'Don't cut off the other one. Leave that for us! This will be for Yatzek, and the other one for Panna Seninska!' But Martsian dropped his sword, for he was bleeding dreadfully, and then he fainted. We poured water over his head and wine into his mouth to revive him, so that he could meet the next one of us. He recovered, and said to us: 'Now that you have sought justice yourselves, you cannot seek any other justice.' But he fainted again. Then we went away, regretting that we did not get the other ear. Lukash says that he could have killed him, but he spared him for us, and particularly for Yatzek. Well, I don't know if anybody in our place would have acted differently, for it is no sin to crush such vermin as Martsian; but it seems that it does not pay to do the proper thing nowadays, since we have to suffer for it now."

"True! He is right!" cried the other Bukoyemskis.

"Well, under such circumstances it is altogether a different matter," said Father Voinowski; "still, the gift is inappropriate."

The brothers regarded each other for some time with amazement.

"Why inappropriate?" asked Marek. "You do not think we brought it for Yatzek to eat, do you?"

"I thank you from the depth of my soul for your good

wishes," said Pan Tachewski. "I am sure you have not brought it to me that I should store it away."

"It has turned somewhat green; it might be smoked and dried."

"Let some one bury it at once," said the priest, sternly. "It is the ear of a Christian, anyway."

"We were treated better than this in Kiev," grumbled Matvey.

"Kshepetski must have come to Cracow to plan a new attack on Anusya," remarked Yatzek.

"He will not take her away from the palace of the King," said Pan Ciprianowicz; "but, if I am not mistaken, he did not come for that purpose. I think that he wanted to find out whether we know that he had planned the attack on us, and whether we have complained against him. It may be that old Kshepetski knew nothing of his son's undertaking; but, if he did, both of them must be greatly alarmed, and I should not at all be surprised if Martsian had come here to find out how the matter stood."

"He has no luck with the Bukoyemskis, it seems," said Stanislav, laughing.

"Let him go," declared Pan Tachewski. "To-day I am ready to forgive him."

The Bukoyemskis and Stanislav were astonished to hear Yatzek's words, for they knew the stubbornness of the young knight. When Tachewski noticed this, he added, as though answering them:

"For Anusya will soon be mine, and to-morrow I shall be a Christian warrior and defender of our faith, and as such my heart shall be free from all personal enmity."

"May God bless you for that!" cried the priest.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT last Tachewski's long-wished-for day of happiness arrived. A rumor spread among the citizens of Cracow, and was repeated from mouth to mouth with surprise, that there was a knight in the army who was getting married, only to start for the battlefield on the day after the wedding. When it also became known that the King and the Queen would be present at the marriage ceremony, crowds began to gather in and about the church from early morning. The crowd had swelled to such proportions that officers were required in order to make room for the guests to pass. Pan Tachewski's friends were all there to a man; they came out of friendship and good-will to Yatzek, and also because they were eager to be seen in a company where the King himself would be present and to meet him socially. Many officers of high rank appeared, also, even people who had never before known of Pan Tachewski; for it was known that the Queen favored the marriage, and almost everything depended on the Queen's inclination and favor at the court.

People of high and low degrees were all surprised that the King should find time to attend the wedding of an ordinary officer just when the fate of the whole republic was resting on his shoulders, and when couriers from foreign lands came daily rushing on foaming horses. Some people looked upon this as a desire on the part of the King to win the favor of the army; others said that there

must be some bonds of kinship between the royal family and the bridegroom or bride; still others ridiculed these suppositions.

The Seninkas were hardly remembered by the people; so, to avoid every calumny and gossip, the King announced that the Sobieskis were greatly indebted to that family. Then society people began to take an interest in Panna Seninska; and, as is usual at courts, they now pitied her, now they were touched by her sufferings, and now they praised her virtue and beauty. Reports as to her beauty reached even the masses, and at last, when they saw her, they were not at all disappointed.

She arrived in church with the Queen. All eyes were first turned to that lofty lady, who was still brilliantly charming, like the bright sun before evening; but when they looked at the bride all whispered, and even some loud voices were heard:

“Marvelous! marvelous! The man who sees such a woman even once in his life owes much to his eyes.”

And it was true. In those days brides were not dressed in white for the wedding; but the young ladies arrayed Panna Seninska in white, for such was her wish, and that was the color of her finest dress. Thus, attired in white, with a green wreath over her golden hair, pale-faced and somewhat confused, with downcast eyes, silent, slender, she looked like a snow-white swan, or like a white lily. Even Yatzek was astonished when he saw her now.

“My God!” he said to himself. “How can I go near her? She is a queen, or an angel, with whom it is a sin to speak unless kneeling.”

When he and Anusya knelt side by side before the altar, and Father Voinowski said, with emotion, “I knew you both when you were little children,” and joined their hands; and when he heard his own voice saying, “I take you as

my wife," and the hymn resounded a moment later, Yatzek felt as though his bosom would burst with happiness, especially now that he was not wearing his armor. He had loved Anusya from childhood, and he knew that he loved her, but now he realized for the first time how great his love was. And he said to himself again: "I must die, for if a man were to have so much happiness during life, what more could there be for him in heaven?" But he felt that before he died he must thank God. And suddenly there appeared before his eyes a picture of Turkish legions, of beards, turbans, sashes, bent swords and standards. And a prayer burst forth from his heart: "O Lord, I will thank Thee! I will thank Thee!" And he felt that he would become as a terrible lion unto those enemies of the cross and the faith. But this vision vanished in an instant, and a wave of boundless love and happiness rushed to his heart.

By this time the ceremony was over; the guests started for the house prepared for the young couple by Stanislav and ornamented by his comrades. Yatzek could press the young Pani Tachewski to his bosom only for a brief moment, for they had to run to meet the King and Queen, who had just arrived from the church. Two high arm-chairs stood by the table, prepared for the royal pair. After the royal blessing, during which the newly married couple were kneeling, Yatzek begged their majesties to the wedding feast; but the King declined, saying:

"Dear comrade, I should be glad to talk with you, and still more with you, my relative"—he turned to Pani Tachewski—"and discuss your dowry. I can stay only for a moment and drink your health; but I have no time to sit down with you, for my mind is occupied with so many important affairs that every hour is precious."

"That's true!" cried a number of voices.

Pan Tachewski clasped the feet of the King, who took a filled goblet from the table and said:

"Esteemed gentlemen, I drink the health of the young couple!"

"*Vivant! crescant! floreant!*" shouted some in the crowd.

Then the King spoke again, addressing Tachewski:

"Your happiness must be brief now. You may remain here a few days, but then you must follow your regiment quickly, for we shall not wait."

"It is easier for her to remain without you than for Vienna without us," said Pan Matchinski, smiling at Tachewski.

"But Lubormirski is mowing down the Turks there," said one of the hussars.

"I have good news from our men," said the King. "I have commanded Matchinski to bring it here, to be read before you and cheer the hearts of our warriors. It is from the Duke of Lorraine, commander-in-chief for the Emperor; he writes me about the battle near Pressburg."

And he read slowly, for the letter was in the French language, and he read it to the nobles in Polish:

"The Emperor's cavalry advanced effectively and enthusiastically, but the Poles left no work for the Germans. I know of no words adequate enough to praise the strength, courage and bearing of the officers and men under Pan Lubomirski."

"The battle,' writes the Duke of Lorraine, 'was a great one, and our glory not less.'"

"We will show that we can do as well," cried the warriors.

"I am confident; but we must make haste, for later advices show signs for alarm. Vienna is barely able to breathe,

and all Christendom looks toward us for aid. Shall we be there in season?"

"But few regiments have remained here; the main forces are stationed at the heights of Tarkow, waiting, under the command of the hetman," said Father Voinowski; "but if we are all needed at Vienna, we are not needed so much as a leader like Your Royal Highness."

The King smiled, and replied:

"That is exactly what the Duke of Lorraine writes. Well, then, gentlemen, be ready, for I may order the sounding of the trumpets at any hour."

"When, Your Royal Highness?" asked a number of voices.

"To-morrow I will send off the regiments which are still here," said the King, seriously; then he glanced at Tachewski, as though to test him. "As Her Grace the Queen will go with us to the Heights to see the review of the troops there, you may remain here, if you promise to overtake us at the appointed time. Unless, perhaps, you wish to ask of us another office."

Yatzek Tachewski put his arm around his wife, and both advanced a step toward the King.

"Your Royal Highness," said Yatzek, "if the German Empire or even the Kingdom of France were offered to me in exchange for this lady, the Lord, who sees the depths of my heart, knows that I would not accept either, and that I would not give her for the greatest treasure in existence. But God forbid that I should forsake my service, or lose an opportunity, or neglect a religious war, or desert my leader because of my private happiness. I should despise myself if I did it, and she, I know, would also despise me. If misfortune should bar the road and I could not join you, I would be consumed with shame and sorrow."

Tears glistened in his eyes, his cheeks were flushed; and

he added, in a voice quivering with emotion: "To-day I swore before the altar. I said: 'O Lord, I will thank Thee! I will thank Thee! Only with my life, with my blood, with my work, could I repay for the happiness which is mine now! Therefore I shall not ask for any new office, and when you start, O gracious King and leader, I shall not linger even a single day behind you. I shall go at the same time that all will go, even though I were to die to-morrow.'"

He sank down on his knees at the feet of the King, who bent forward, embraced his head, and said:

"With more such men as you the Polish name will resound throughout the world!"

Father Voinowski's eyes filled with tears; the Bukoyemskis were crying aloud. Every man present was seized with emotion and enthusiasm.

"On to the pagans! For our faith!" thundered a great number of voices. Then there was a clanking of swords. When the noise had somewhat subsided, Pani Tachewski, pale-faced, bent to Yatzek's ear and whispered:

"Oh, Yatzek, be not surprised at my tears, for I fear that if you go I may never see you again—but go!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

BUT Yatzek and Anusya remained together for two days. The King, it is true, started on the day after the wedding; but the Queen, with all the ladies of the court and a great number of officials of high rank, accompanied the King to the Heights of Tarnow, where a great review of the troops had been ordered. The party traveled slowly, and it was easy to overtake it. The subsequent advance of the forces, led by the King, to Vienna was regarded by the world as remarkable for its swiftness, especially since the King arrived some time before the main army; but it took the Queen and her party almost six days to reach the Heights of Tarnow. The Tachewskis joined them with their escort on the third day. Pani Tachewski took her seat then in a court carriage, while Yatzek hurried to the camp to join his regiment. On the twenty-second of August the King solemnly bade his beloved "Marisenka" farewell. In the morning he mounted and marshaled the troops before her; then he started out, leading it to Glvitsi.

The people noticed that whenever the King had to bid the Queen farewell he did so with profound sorrow; for he loved her with all his heart, and was grieved even by a brief absence. Yet this time he looked cheerful and radiant. This encouraged the statesmen and the clergy present. They realized the gravity of the war, especially since the enemy was advancing with greater forces than ever before. "The Turks have moved three parts of the

world," they thought; "but if the King, their greatest destroyer, goes so cheerfully to the struggle, we should have no cause for anxiety." And their hearts filled with hope, and as the warriors were passing by them their hope kept increasing, until it turned into complete confidence in victory. As far as the eye could reach the sun was shining on helmets, on armor, on swords, on muskets and cannon. The glitter dazzled the eyes of the onlookers. Banners and ensigns of rainbow colors waved in the blue air above the marching troops. The rolling of drums among the infantry regiments was mingled with the sounds of trumpets and horns, and with the noise of the janizari orchestra, and the neighing of horses.

The royal carriage stopped on a somewhat elevated plain, by the right side of the road, along which the regiments were to pass. In the first carriage sat the Queen, wearing plumes, laces and velvet bedecked with precious stones. She was beautiful, majestic, with the air of a woman possessing all that the most daring imagination could design; she had a crown, and the love of the most glorious of contemporary kings. Like the statesmen and the clergy, she felt confident that her husband, on horseback, would again lead his forces to triumph, as he had done before. And she felt that at that moment the eyes of the whole world, from Tsargrad to Rome, Madrid and Paris, were fixed on him, that all Christendom was stretching out hands to him, and that only in the iron arms of his warriors did they see salvation. The Queen's heart was now filled with pride. "Our power is increasing," she said to herself, "and we shall be glorious above all other kings." And therefore, though her husband was leading but a little over twenty thousand men against countless hordes of the enemy, her heart nevertheless was filled with joy, and her white forehead was not for a moment obscured with alarm or anxiety.

"Behold the victor, behold your father, the King," she said to her children, who filled the carriage like little birds in a nest. "When he comes back the whole world will kneel before him with prayers and thanks."

In the carriages behind that of the Queen were many charming court ladies, bishops and the dignified, grave-faced statesmen who remained at home to hold the reins of government in the absence of the King. The King, at the head of the army, stood out clearly on the height, like a giant on horseback. It looked to the onlookers as though the army was to pass before him, at his feet.

First came Pan Kantski's artillery, with the rolling sound of drums; after it came the infantry regiments, carrying muskets, led by officers with swords hanging on straps at their sides, and with long canes, with which they kept all ranks in order. These soldiers marched four abreast and looked like a moving fortress; their steps kept time and produced a thundering noise.

Each regiment, passing Her Majesty's carriage, saluted by a loud shout and lowered its ensign. Among the regiments were some with better outfits than others; but the best-looking regiment of all was made up of Kashubians in blue coats and yellow belts for ammunition. These Kashubians, tall, strong men, had been so carefully picked, one by one, that they all looked like brothers; the heavy muskets in their powerful hands looked like walking-canes. At the sound of the fife they stepped before the King as one man, and presented arms so faultlessly that he smiled with delight; and the statesmen said to one another: "The Sultan's own bodyguard would fare ill if they were to strike against these fellows. They are lions, not human beings!"

Soon came squadrons of light horse, and each rider seemed as though grown together to his horse. These were worthy descendants of the horsemen who had trampled all

Germany, mowing down with their swords or sweeping off with the hoofs of their horses entire regiments of Luther's defenders. The heaviest cavalry in the world, of the same number of men, could not defeat them, and the lightest could not escape from them. The King himself had said of these men at Khotim: "When they are brought to the enemy they will cut down all before them as a mower cuts down the grass." And though they now moved slowly as they passed by the carriages, even those unfamiliar with warfare knew at once that at the proper moment nothing but a hurricane could surpass them in swiftness, in power to overthrow and destroy. Amidst the sounds of trumpets and drums they marched on, squadron after squadron, their drawn swords quivering like flashes of flame in the brilliant sunlight. Having passed the court carriages, they advanced like a suddenly onrushing wave, changing their trot to a gallop, and, having formed a giant circle, they passed again, and this time they rushed past and near the Queen's carriage like a whirlwind, shouting, "Strike! Strike!" In their uplifted right hands they held their swords, pointed forward as if attacking. Their horses, with nostrils expanded to the utmost and manes tossed by the wind, seemed as though wild from the impetus of their onrush. Thus they passed again by the Queen's carriage, and then they suddenly halted, without breaking ranks.

This they did so perfectly that foreigners, of whom there were many at that court, and who saw then for the first time Polish cavalry in action, regarded one another with amazement, as though doubting their own eyes.

After they had passed, the dragoons appeared on the field, as though strewing it with blossoms. Some of these regiments were under Pan Yablonowski; others had been gathered by private magnates, and one was maintained by

the King from his own private fortune. This regiment was commanded by Pan Maligni, the brother of the Queen.

The dragoons were composed mostly of plain people; but these men were trained to riding from childhood; they were experienced in fighting, stubborn and enduring under fire.

But only when the hussars appeared were the greatest enthusiasm and delight aroused in the spectators. They advanced slowly, with an air of importance becoming such valuable regiments. Their horses were heavier than those in other squadrons; their steel breast-plates were inlaid with gold. On their shoulders were wings, the feathers of which, tossed by the wind, produced the rustling sound heard in forests.

The great dignity and pride with which they moved forward made so deep an impression that the Queen, the court ladies, the statesmen, and especially the foreigners, stood up in their carriages in order to gain a better view. There was something terrible and tremendous in that march, for it came to the minds of the spectators that there was no human power that could check this avalanche of iron if it should rush forward, leaving destruction in its wake; for it was not so long before that three thousand such horsemen had ground into dust Swedish hosts which outnumbered them five to one. Still more recent was the day when a single squadron like that had rushed, like a spirit of destruction, through the entire army of Karl Gustav; and not long ago, at Khotim, these same hussars, led by the King, had crushed the Turkish guards as easily as though they had mowed down wheat in the fields. Many of the men who had participated in the battle of Khotim now rode proudly, calmly and confidently, ready to start now toward the walls of a foreign city to reap a new harvest.

These horsemen seemed the embodiment of terror and

power. Suddenly a breeze rose behind them, whistling in their streamers, tossing forward the manes of the horses and waving the wings at the shoulders of each mounted warrior; and the Spanish horses drawing the court carriages grew restless. The squadrons now passed the carriages at a distance of about twenty yards only. It was then that Pani Tachewski saw her husband for the last time before the expedition. He rode in the second row at the side of the regiment, in iron and winged armor, his helmet covering his cheeks completely. His large bay horse carried him easily, despite the heavy armor, his head uplifted high, snorting loudly, as if in good omen for the rider. Yatzek turned his iron-covered head toward his wife; his lips stirred as though whispering; but, though she heard no words, she understood that he was uttering, "Farewell! farewell!" and her heart filled with painful longing and with love, and she felt that she would have sacrificed her life if she could only turn into a swallow at that moment and perch on his shoulder, or on the flag attached to his lance, and follow him.

"Farewell, Yatzek! May God guard you!" she cried, outstretching her arms toward him. Her eyes were filled with tears as he rode past her solemnly, flashing in the sunlight, and sanctified, as it seemed to her, by his great mission.

Behind this regiment came that of Prince Alexander, followed by others, also both terrible and brilliant. Other regiments formed a vast circle and kept marching.

The people in the carriages on the height could see almost all the regiments. Crimson uniforms, flashing breastplates, glittering swords and a forest of lances moved on and on under great banners which looked like giant flowers. The odor of horse-foam was wafted by the breeze from the regiments nearby, and the people in the carriages heard

distinctly the shouts of the commanding officers, the shrill sounds of fifes and the deep rolling sounds of the drums. And there was a note of triumph in all those sounds, in all that enthusiasm and eagerness for battle. Every heart was filled with complete confidence in the victory of the cross over the crescent.

The King remained for some time by the carriage of the Queen. Then the blessing was pronounced over him with a cross and with relics by the Bishop of Cracow, and he immediately galloped away to the army. Sounds of trumpets suddenly smote the air, and infantry and cavalry regiments stirred, slowly falling into line, then starting off westward. First went the light-horse brigade, behind the hussars, the dragoons forming the rear end.

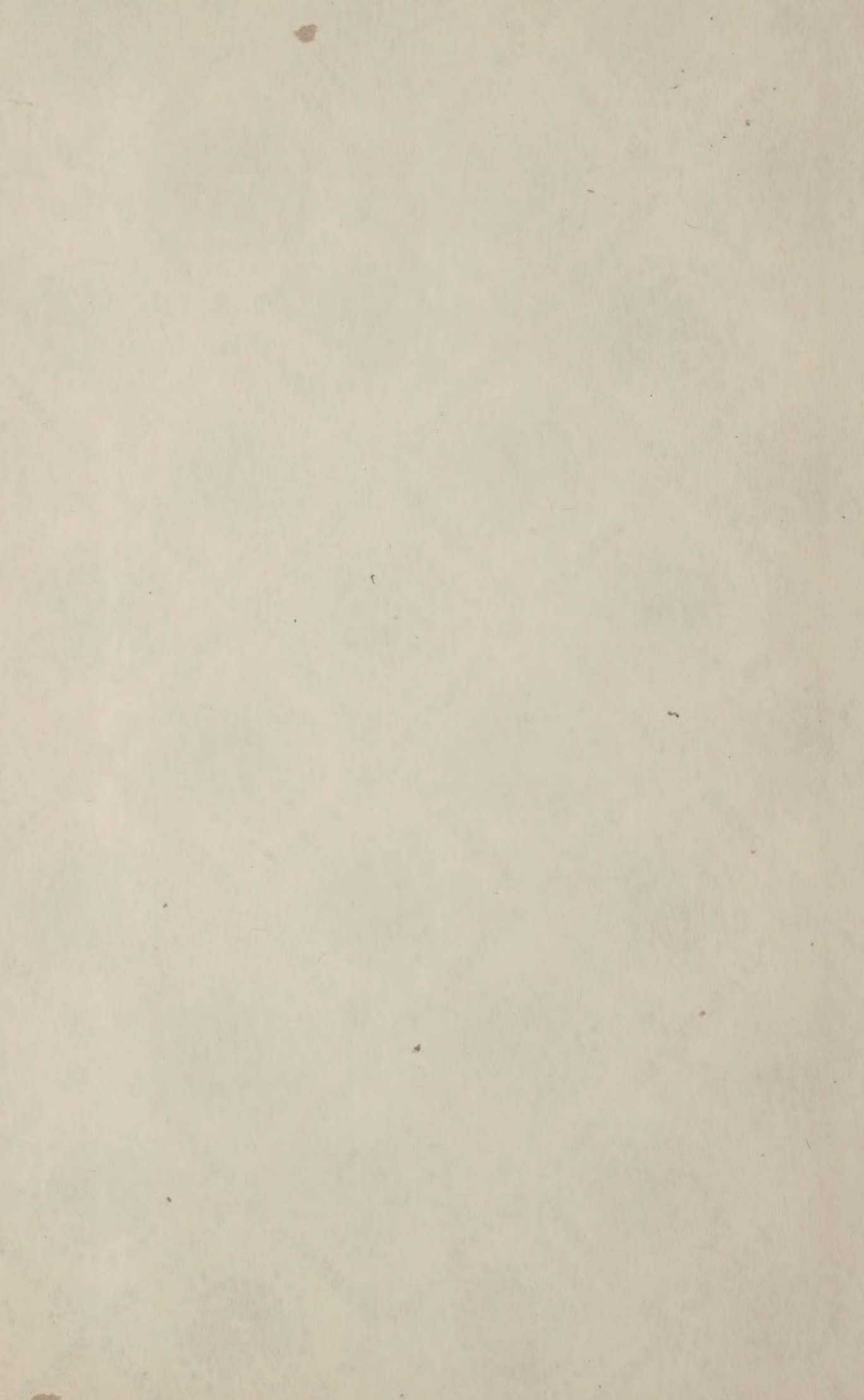
The Bishop of Cracow raised the cross with both hands and said:

“O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, have mercy on Thy people!”

At that moment more than twenty thousand voices burst forth, singing the hymn composed for that occasion by Pan Kokhowski:

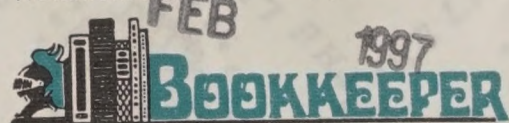
“For thee, O pure, immaculate Virgin, we go to fight for Christ our Lord. For thee, our dear country; for you, O white eagles, we will crush all enemies on the field of glory.”

THE END.





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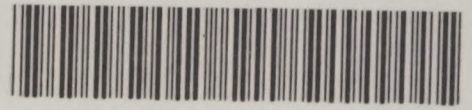
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